

# Call of the Wild

Jack London





# THE CALL OF THE WILD

JACK LONDON

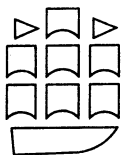
Simplified by Brian Heaton and Michael West

*Illustrated by Patricia Marriott*

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1500 word vocabulary

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**Note:** Words with a star\* are outside stage 4 of the New Method Supplementary Readers and are not explained in the text. These extra words are in a list on page 107.

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*He moved the club to his right hand*

# One

## *JOURNEY INTO THE NORTH*

Buck did not read the newspapers, so he did not know that trouble was on its way for himself and for every other strong, warm-haired dog. Because men had found a yellow metal called gold, thousands were rushing into the Northland. These men wanted dogs, and the dogs they wanted were strong and heavy dogs which could work hard and which had long coats to protect them from the snow and ice.

Buck lived at a big house in a sunny valley. The house was called Judge Miller's place. It stood back from the road, half hidden among the trees. The roads to the house passed through wide-spreading lawns and under the branches of tall trees. There was even more space at the back of the house than at the front. There were many buildings, servants' houses, green fields and woods.

Buck ruled over all this like a king. He was born here and he had lived the four years of his life here. It was true that there were other dogs: it was such a big place. But the other dogs were not important. They came and went and they lived outside or in the corners of the house.

Buck was not like these dogs. The whole place was his. He swam or went hunting with the Judge's sons; he stayed at the side of the Judge's two daughters on long walks at sunset or in the early morning; on winter nights he lay at the Judge's feet before the big fire in the library; he carried the Judge's grandsons on his back or rolled

them in the grass. Among the other dogs he walked proudly, for he was king—king over all living things of Judge Miller's place.

Buck's father, a large St. Bernard, had been the Judge's close companion, and Buck tried hard to follow in the way of his father. He was not so large as his father because his mother, Shep, had been a Scotch shepherd dog; but Buck was able to behave like a true king. Although Buck had great pride, he was not a spoilt house-dog. Hunting and other outdoor delights had kept down the fat and made his body strong. And his love of water had kept him healthy.

This was Buck in the autumn of 1897, when the discovery of gold in the Klondike drew men from all over the world into the frozen North. But Buck did not read the newspapers. Nor did he know that Manuel, one of the gardener's helpers, was a bad man. And Manuel needed money.

One night when the Judge and the boys were out, Manuel took Buck for a walk. No one saw them go off through the woods to a small station. At the small station a man talked with Manuel and gave him some money.

Manuel put a piece of thick rope around Buck's neck. Manuel told the stranger, "If you pull it sharply, he won't be able to breath."

Buck allowed Manuel to put the rope around his neck, for he had learned to trust in the men whom he knew. But when the ends of the rope were placed in the stranger's hands, he growled\* : he made an angry noise to show that he was not at all pleased. To his surprise, the man pulled the rope round his neck, shutting off his breath. In quick anger he sprang at the man, but the man met him mid-



way. The man caught hold of him near his throat\* and, with a quick turn of the hand, threw Buck over on his back. Then he pulled the rope without mercy while Buck struggled angrily, his tongue hanging out of his mouth and his great chest moving up and down without result. He had never in all his life been treated so shamefully, and he had never in all his life been so angry. But

his strength left him and his eyes closed. He knew nothing when the train arrived and the two men threw him on it.

The next thing he knew was that his tongue was hurting. The noise of the train told him where he was. He had often travelled with the Judge and he knew the feeling of riding on a train. He opened his eyes, and anger came into them. The man sprang for his throat, but Buck was too quick for him. His teeth bit the man's hand. They did not stop biting until the rope around his neck was pulled again.

The man spoke about that night's ride in a little hut on the San Francisco water-front.

"I get only fifty for it," he said, "and I wouldn't do it again for a thousand."

There was a bloody handkerchief around his hand.

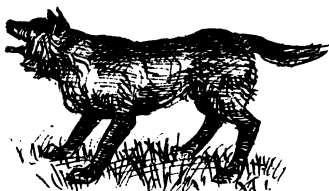
"How much did you pay for the dog?" the other man demanded.

"A hundred," was the reply. "Not a cent less."

"I'll give you a hundred and fifty," said the other man. "The dog is worth it."

Buck was unable to think clearly and suffering great pain; he attempted to face the two men; but he was thrown down and the rope was pulled again and again. Then the rope was removed, and he was thrown into a cage.

He lay there for the rest of the long night; he was angry because his pride was wounded. He could not understand what it all meant. What did these strange men want with him? Why were they keeping him a prisoner in this narrow cage? He did not know why, but he felt that something terrible would happen to him. Several times during the night he sprang to his feet, expecting to see the Judge, or the boys. But each time it was the face of a stranger that looked at him by the yellow light of a small candle. And each time the joyful bark\* in Buck's throat was turned into an angry growl.



*bark*

In the morning four men entered and picked up the cage. They were evil-looking men; and Buck growled and sprang at them through the bars. They only laughed and pushed sticks at him. At first he tried to bite the sticks. Then he lay down and allowed them to lift the cage onto a train. Then he, and the cage in which he was a prisoner, began to pass through many hands. Some men in an office took charge of him; he was carried about on another train; he was put on a small ship;

he was taken off the ship to a big railway station, and at last he was thrown onto another train.

Buck travelled on this train for two days and nights; and for two days and nights he neither ate nor drank. In his anger he growled at everyone who came to him. When he threw himself against the bars of his cage, they laughed at him. They growled and barked like dogs, made noises like cats, or moved their arms and made noises like birds. He knew that it was all very silly; but it hurt his pride and his anger grew and grew. He did not mind the hunger so much; but he suffered greatly because he had no water.

He was glad for one thing: the rope was off his neck. Now that it was off, he would show them! They would never get another rope around his neck. For two days and nights he neither ate nor drank: during those two days and nights he gathered up a great deal of anger. His eyes turned red with blood, and he was changed into a wild devil. He was changed so much that the Judge himself would not have known him. The men on the train breathed freely again when they carried him off the train at Seattle.

Four men carried the cage from the train into a small, high-walled back yard. A fat man came out and signed the book for the driver. Buck threw himself wildly against the bars of the cage. The man smiled cruelly, and brought out an axe and a club\*,—a heavy stick.

“You aren’t going to take him out now, are you?” the driver asked.

“Certainly,” the man replied, driving the axe into the cage in order to open it.

The four men who had carried it in immediately ran away. They prepared to watch the show from the top of the wall.

Buck rushed at the breaking wood, bit it and struggled with it. He was madly anxious to get out. The man with the axe was calmly trying to get him out.

"Now, you red-eyed devil," he said, when he had made an opening large enough for Buck's body to pass through. At the same time he dropped the axe and moved the club to his right hand.

Buck was truly a red-eyed devil, as he prepared to spring. His hair stood on end, and his red eyes shone with madness. He sprang straight at the man. In mid-air, just as his mouth was about to close on the man, he received a blow that made him shut his mouth in great pain. He fell to the ground on his back. He had never been struck by a club in his life. He did not understand. With a growl of pain he was again on his feet. He sprang at the man, but again the blow came and he was brought to the ground. This time he knew that it was the club; but he was now so angry that he did not care. He charged a dozen times. A dozen times the club stopped the charge and struck him down.

After an especially fierce blow, he came slowly to his feet, too tired to rush. He moved without strength, the blood flowing from nose and mouth and ears. His beautiful coat was covered with blood. Then the man advanced and gave him a terrible blow on the nose. All the pain which he had suffered was nothing like the great pain he felt now. Buck cried out in anger and again threw himself at the man. But the man, moving the club from right to left, calmly caught him above his throat. At the

same time he pulled down and backwards. Buck turned a complete circle in the air: then he fell to the ground on his head and chest.

For the last time he rushed. The man struck the sharp blow which he had kept back on purpose for so long. Buck was helpless; he fell—and knew nothing more.

“He knows how to break in dogs!” cried one of the men on the wall: “he certainly does!”

Buck slowly opened his eyes. He had no strength. He lay where he had fallen. From there he watched the man who had struck him so many times.

“He answers to the name of Buck,” the man said aloud to himself. He was reading a letter about the cage and Buck. “Well, Buck, my boy,” he went on in a friendly voice, “we’ve had our little trouble. That should be enough. You’ve learned your place; and I know mine. Be a good dog, and all will go well. Be a bad dog, and I’ll beat you without mercy. Do you understand?”

As he spoke he touched without fear the head which he had beaten so hard. Though Buck’s hair stood on end at the touch of the hand, he bore it without growling. When the man brought him water, he drank eagerly. Later he ate a big meal of uncooked meat from the man’s hand.

He knew that he was beaten; but he was not broken. He saw that he stood no chance against a man with a club. He had learned the lesson, and in all his life he never forgot it. It was his first meeting with the law of the club. Life now had a fiercer look.

As the days went by, other dogs came, in boxes and at the ends of ropes. Some came quietly and some came

growling as he had come. He watched all of them pass under the power of the man with the club. Again and again, as he looked at each cruel fight, Buck remembered the lesson: a man with a club was a lawgiver and a master to be obeyed. This did not mean that Buck had to like the man, though he did see beaten dogs which showed signs of becoming friendly to the man. Also, he saw one dog, that would neither be friendly nor obey, killed in the struggle.

Now and again men came. They were strangers who talked excitedly and in all kinds of ways to the man with the club. When money passed between them, the strangers took one or more of the dogs away with them. Buck wondered where they went, for they never came back. But he feared the future, and he was glad each time he was not chosen.

Yet Buck's turn came in the end. Perrault was a small man who spoke poor English. He also used many strange and rough expressions which Buck could not understand.

"Eh!" he cried, when he saw Buck. "That's a big, strong dog! How much?"

"Three hundred, and he's a gift at that price," was the quick reply of the man with the club. "And it's government money that you're spending. You can't lose anything, eh, Perrault?"

Perrault smiled. As the price of dogs had risen very highly, it was not an unfair amount for so fine an animal. The Canadian Government would not lose, and its letters would not travel slower. Perrault knew dogs. When he looked at Buck, he knew that he was one dog in a thousand—"One in ten thousand," he whispered to himself.

Buck saw money pass between the two men. He was not surprised when another dog, called Curly, and he were led away by the small man. That was the last he saw of the man with the club. As Curly and he looked back at Seattle from the ship it was the last he saw of the warm Southland. Curly and he were taken below by Perrault and given to a man called François. Perrault was French-Canadian, and he had a dark skin; but François, who was also French-Canadian, was twice as dark-skinned. They were a new kind of men to Buck. Although he had no love for them, he learned to respect them. He speedily learned that Perrault and François were fair men, calm and just. They were too wise in the way of dogs to be fooled by dogs.

On the ship, Buck and Curly joined two other dogs. One of them was a big, snow-white fellow from Spitzbergen who had been brought away by a sea-captain. He was called Spitz and was friendly, in an untrustworthy sort of way. He smiled into one's face while he was planning some secret, dishonest trick—as when he stole from Buck's food at the first meal. François struck him before Buck could attack him; and the only thing Buck could do was to take back his bone. Buck decided that François had treated him fairly, and his opinion of him began to rise.

The other dog, called Dave, made no advances, nor received any. Also, he did not attempt to steal from them. He was a dull, unfriendly fellow, and he showed Curly plainly that all he desired was to be left alone. He showed him, too, that there would be trouble if he was not left alone. Dave ate and slept, and took interest in nothing, not even when the ship sailed through rough seas. When Buck and Curly grew excited, half wild with

fear, he raised his head as though annoyed, looked at them, and went to sleep again.

Day and night the ship sailed on. One day was very like another, but Buck noticed that the weather was growing colder. At last, one morning, the ship stopped, and everyone on board was excited. Buck felt excited, as did the other dogs, and he knew that a change was near. François put a rope round them, and brought them outside. At the first step, Buck's feet went down in something very like mud. It was white and soft. He sprang back with a quick growl. More of this white stuff was falling through the air. He shook himself, but more of it fell upon him. He smelt it curiously, then tasted some of it on his tongue. It bit like fire, and the next moment was gone. This puzzled him. He tried it again, with the same result. Those who were watching laughed loudly, and he felt ashamed: he did not know why, for it was his first snow.

## Two

### *THE LAW OF THE WILD*

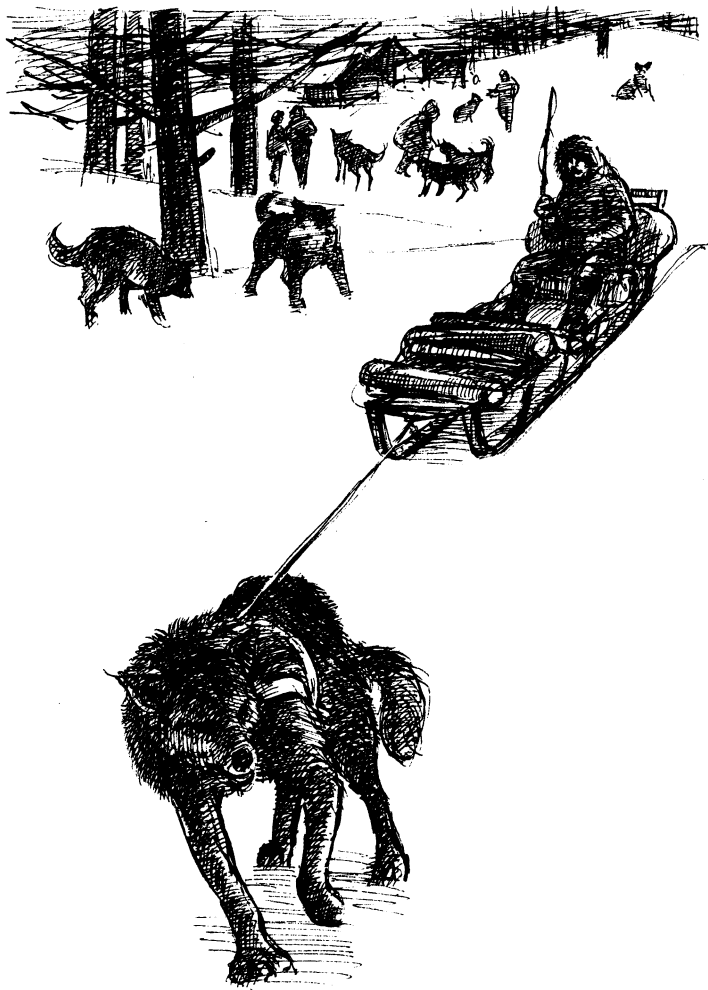
Buck's first day in this new country was like a bad dream. Every hour was filled with sudden surprise. He had suddenly been thrown into the heart of the wild. This was no lazy, sun-kissed life, with nothing to do but waste time. Here there was neither peace, nor rest, nor a moment's safety. It was necessary to be always wide-awake and careful; for these dogs and men were not town dogs and men. They were wild and fierce, all of them,

and they knew no law but the law of force.

He had never seen dogs fight as these wolfish creatures fought. His first experience taught him a lesson which he would never forget. It is true that it did not happen to him, or he would be dead. They had camped near the wood store and Curly, in her friendly way, went near a big dog. Suddenly the big dog sprang at Curly. There was the sound of teeth meeting, and the big dog sprang back. Curly's face was cut open from eye to mouth.

It was the wolf manner of fighting, to strike and spring away, but there was more to it than this. Thirty or forty dogs ran to the spot and stood round the two dogs in an eager and silent circle. Buck did not understand that silent eagerness, nor the way their tongues were moving. Curly rushed at the big dog, who struck again and jumped aside. He stopped her next rush with his chest, in a strange way that pushed Curly off her feet. She never got up again. The other dogs had been waiting for this to happen. They jumped on Curly, with excited noises, all barking and growling.

It was so sudden that Buck was surprised. He saw Spitz laughing; and he saw François, swinging an axe, spring into the crowd of dogs. Three men with clubs were helping him to drive them away. It did not take long. The last of the dogs was driven off two minutes after Curly had fallen down. But she lay there still and lifeless in the blood-covered snow, cut to pieces. The sight of Curly often came back to Buck to trouble him in his sleep. So that was the way. No fair play. Once down, that was the end of you. Well, he would make sure that he never went down. Spitz laughed again, and from that moment Buck felt great hatred towards him.



*Buck wore a harness and pulled a sledge*

Soon after the death of Curly, Buck received another surprise. François put a harness\* upon him: the harness was like the ones put on the horses at home. And as he had seen horses work, so he was set to work, pulling François on a sledge\* to the forest and returning with a load of wood. Though this hurt his pride, he was too wise to try to refuse. He began to work eagerly and did his best, though it was all new and strange. François expected everyone to obey him immediately. Dave, who had much experience of pulling sledges, bit Buck's back legs whenever he did anything wrong. Spitz was the leader of the dogs and made certain that Buck did his work properly. Buck learned easily and improved quickly. Before they returned to camp he knew enough to stop at the cry, "Ho!", to go forwards at "Mush!", to swing wide round the corners, and to keep clear of the dog behind him when the loaded sledge went downhill.

"These are very good dogs," François told Perrault. "That Buck pulls very hard. I taught him very quickly."

By afternoon, Perrault, who was in a hurry to be off on his journey with his mail, returned with two more dogs. He called them "Billee" and "Joe". Although these two dogs were brothers, they were as different as day and night. Billee's one fault was his good nature, while Joe was the very opposite and was always barking angrily. Buck received them in a friendly manner, but Dave took no notice of them, and Spitz fought first one and then the other. Billee showed no desire to fight, turned to run, and cried when Spitz's sharp teeth bit him. But when Spitz circled, Joe always turned to face him, hair standing on end, ears laid back, lips moving in anger, mouth quickly opening and closing, and with an evil light in his eyes.

Joe appeared so terrible that Spitz was forced to stop his attack on him. To save his pride, Spitz turned upon the crying Billee and drove him away.

By evening Perrault had got another dog. He was an old dog, long and thin, with a battle-marked face and a single eye. He was called Sol-leks, which means the Angry One, and other dogs respected him. Like Dave, he asked nothing, gave nothing, expected nothing. When he marched slowly to join them, even Spitz left him alone. There was one strange thing about him which Buck was unlucky enough to discover. He did not like to be approached on his blind side. Not knowing this, Buck went up to Sol-leks in this way. Sol-leks suddenly turned upon Buck and cut his shoulder to the bone for three inches up and down. After this, Buck always kept away from his blind side, and to the end of their friendship he had no more trouble. Sol-leks' only desire, like Dave's, was to be left alone. But, as Buck learnt later, each of them possessed one other, greater desire.

That night Buck had great difficulty in sleeping. The tent looked warm in the middle of the white plain. When he entered it, both Perrault and François shouted angrily at him and threw things at him until he ran away into the cold outside. A cold wind was blowing: it bit into him sharply and made his wounded shoulder very painful. He lay down on the snow and attempted to sleep, but the cold soon drove him to his feet. He wandered sadly and hopelessly among the many tents, only to find that one place was as cold as another. Here and there wild dogs rushed upon him, but he growled fiercely (for he was learning fast), and they let him go his way.

At last an idea came to him. He would return and

see how the other dogs in the camp were getting along. To his surprise, they had disappeared. Again he wandered about through the great camp, looking for them, and again he returned. Were they in the tent? No, that could not be, or else he would not have been driven out. Then where could they possibly be? Cold and unhappy, he aimlessly circled the tent. Suddenly the snow gave way beneath his front legs and he sank down. Something moved quickly under his feet. He sprang back, angry and growling, frightened of the unseen and unknown. But a friendly little cry removed his fears, and he went back to examine the spot. The smell of warm air reached his nose. There, rolled up under the snow in a warm ball, lay Billee. He barked softly and moved to show his good intentions, and even touched Buck's face with his warm wet tongue.

Buck had learnt another lesson. So that was the way they slept. Buck chose a spot and slowly began to dig a hole for himself. In a moment the heat from his body filled the small space and he was asleep. The day had been long and difficult, and he slept soundly and comfortably, though he growled and barked and fought with bad dreams.

He did not open his eyes till he was awakened by the noises of the camp. At first he did not know where he was. It had snowed during the night and he was completely covered. The snow walls pressed him on every side, and a great feeling of fear ran through him. It was a wild animal's fear of being caught. His whole body became tight, the hair on his neck and shoulders stood on end, and with a fierce growl he sprang straight up into the blinding day, the snow flying about him in a white cloud. Before he landed on his feet, he saw the

white camp spread out in front of him and he knew where he was. He remembered all that had passed from the time he went for a walk with Manuel to the hole he had dug for himself the night before.

A shout from François greeted him. "What did I say?" shouted François to Perrault. "That Buck certainly learns quickly!"

Perrault moved his head in agreement. As a man who carried important messages for the Canadian Government, he was anxious to obtain the best dogs, and he was especially pleased with the possession of Buck.

Three more dogs were added to the team inside an hour: now there were nine dogs. Before another quarter of an hour had passed they were pulling the sledge towards the Dyea Cañon. Buck was glad to go, and though the



work was hard he felt proud doing it. He was surprised that all the dogs were so eager and that he, too, felt eager. Still more surprising was the change in Dave and Sol-leks. They were wide-awake and busy, anxious that the work should go well, and fiercely angry with anything that delayed that work. The work of pulling the sledge seemed to be all that they lived for and the only thing in which they took delight.

Dave was the first dog nearest to the sledge. Pulling in front of Dave was Buck, then came Sol-leks; the rest of the dogs were spread out in front in a single line. Spitz was at the front, leading all the dogs.

Buck had been placed between Dave and Sol-leks on purpose so that he might learn a lot. The two dogs were good teachers, never allowing him to make a mistake for long and using their sharp teeth to support their teaching.



Dave was fair and very wise. He never bit Buck without cause, and he never failed to bite him when he needed it. François also struck Buck when he made a mistake, so Buck soon mended his ways. Once, during a short stop, when Buck did something wrong and delayed the start, both Dave and Sol-leks flew at him and bit him. Before the end of the day, Buck had learnt his work so well that his friends stopped biting him. François did not strike him so often, and Perrault even honoured Buck by lifting up his feet and carefully examining them.

It was a hard day's run, up the Cañon, through Sheep Camp, past the Scales and the wood line, across rivers of ice and banks of snow hundreds of feet deep, and over the great Chilcoot Divide, which stands between the salt water and the fresh. They travelled quickly down the chain of lakes, and later that night pulled into the great camp at the head of Lake Bennett. Here thousands of gold-seekers were building boats in preparation for the break-up of the ice in the spring. Buck made his hole in the snow and quickly fell asleep, but early next morning he was pulled out in the cold darkness and put into the harness.

That day they travelled forty miles because the track was good. But the next day, and for many days to follow, there was no track. They had to work harder and they travelled more slowly. Perrault usually travelled in front of the dogs, stamping on the snow to make it easier for them. François, who guided the sledge behind, sometimes changed places with him, but not often. Perrault was in a hurry, and he prided himself on his knowledge of ice. This knowledge was very important, for some of the ice was very thin. Where the water flowed quickly, there was no ice at all.

Day after day, Buck worked as hard as he could, pulling the sledge. They always got up in the dark, and the first grey of daylight found them starting out, leaving fresh miles behind them. And they always set up camp after dark, ate their bit of fish and slept in the snow. Buck was always hungry. The pound and a half of sun-dried fish, which was the amount of food he received each day, seemed far too little. He never had enough, and he suffered from continuous pains of hunger. Yet the other dogs, because they weighed less and were born to the life, received a pound only of the fish and managed to keep in good condition.

He was a slow eater; he found that his friends finished first and then ate his own unfinished food. He could not defend it. While he was fighting two or three, it was disappearing into the mouths of the others. To put an end to this, he ate as fast as they. He was so hungry that he even took what did not belong to him. He watched and learned. When he saw Pike, one of the new dogs, steal a piece of meat behind Perrault's back, he did the same the following day and got away with the whole piece. There was much shouting and noise, but no one thought that Buck was the thief. Another dog, Dub, who was always getting caught, was struck for the deed.

This first act of stealing showed that Buck was fit to take care of himself in this cruel and unfriendly country. It showed that he was able to change himself to fit into changing conditions. If he had been unable to do this, he would have quickly died. It showed that he was losing his respect for the feelings of others and for the things that belonged to them. Whoever kept this respect in the

Northland was a fool and would fail in life.

Buck did not reason this out. He was fit, and that was all. Without knowing it, he changed himself to the new manner of life. During all his life he had never run from a fight. The man with the club had beaten into him the law of the wild. Before that happened, he could have died in order to defend something that belonged to Judge Miller. Now he was able to forget all finer feelings and so save himself. He did not steal for joy of it, but because he was hungry. He did not steal openly, but secretly because he respected the law of the wild. The things which he did were done because it was easier to do them than not to do them.

His improvement was quick. His body became hard as iron and he did not care about pain. He could eat anything, no matter how bad it was. Once eaten, his stomach got everything from it; and his blood carried it to the farthest parts of his body. His sight and smell became sharp, while his hearing became so good that in his sleep he heard the faintest sound and knew whether it brought peace or danger. He learned to bite the ice with his teeth when it collected at the end of his feet. When he was thirsty and there was a thick covering of ice over the water hole, he broke it by jumping up and striking it with his front legs. The best thing he could do was to smell the wind and tell in what direction it would blow the following day. It did not matter how still the air was when he dug his nest by tree or bank, he was always safe and warm when the wind blew later.

Buck not only learnt by experience, but natural forces and feelings long dead within him became alive



*A pack of dogs*

again. He remembered back to the youth of his family, to the time when the wild dogs ran about together in packs\* through the forests and hunted as they ran. It was not difficult for him to learn to fight with his sharp teeth

in the manner of a wolf. He felt the old life within him, and the old tricks of the first wolves were his tricks: they came to him naturally, as though they had been his always. And when, on the still cold nights, he pointed his nose at a star and howled long and wolf-like, it was the very first wolves, dead long ago, pointing their noses at a star and howling through the ages and through him. His howls were their howls, which voiced their trouble and sorrow. They voiced the meaning of the stillness, and the cold, and dark.

Thus, the ancient song flowed through him and he came into his own again. He came because men had found a yellow metal in the North, and because Manuel was a gardener's helper who did not get enough money for the needs of his wife and of himself. Because of that he had come to this wild land, and he had come back to the life of those who lived here and hunted in packs, hundreds of years ago. He had come into his own world again.

## Three

### *A FIGHT TO THE DEATH*

The spirit of the earliest beasts on earth was strong in Buck: it grew and grew under the fierce conditions of his new life. Yet it was a secret growth. His new-born tricks gave him a kind of power. He was too busy changing himself to the new life to feel free from anxiety. Not only did he not pick fights, but he kept away from them whenever possible. He showed a certain carefulness: he did not do anything quickly and without thought. In the great hatred between him and Spitz he suffered everything without complaint and he did nothing to make Spitz angry.

Spitz guessed that Buck was dangerous to him and he showed his teeth in anger whenever he could. He even went out of his way to frighten Buck; he often tried to start the fight which could end only in the death of one or the other. This fight might have come early in the journey if it had not been for an unusual accident.

At the end of this day they camped on the shore of a great lake. Driving snow, a wind that cut like a white-hot knife, and darkness had forced them to search for a camping place. They could hardly have done worse. At their backs rose a wall of rock. It was necessary for Perrault and François to make their fire and spread their clothes on the ice of the lake itself. They had left their tent behind them in order to travel faster. A few sticks of wood provided

them with a fire which soon disappeared through the ice.

Buck made his nest close under the rock. It was so warm and comfortable that he did not want to leave it when François gave out the fish. But when Buck finished eating the fish and returned, he found his nest occupied. An angry growl told him that it was Spitz. Till now Buck had kept away from trouble with his enemy, but this was too much. The beast in him cried out. He sprang upon Spitz with an anger which surprised them both, especially Spitz. Spitz had believed that Buck was an easily frightened dog who was able to protect himself only because of his great weight and size.

François was surprised when they shot out together from the nest. He guessed the cause of the trouble. "A-a-ah!" he cried to Buck. "Give it to him, by God! Give it to him, the dirty thief!"

Spitz was moving in a circle backwards and forwards trying to get a chance to spring in. Buck was no less eager and no less careful, as he also circled back and forth. But just then something happened which no one expected.

There was a shout from Perrault. The crack of a club upon a bony body, and a sharp cry of pain were the first signs of what was to follow. The camp was suddenly discovered to be full of hungry dogs. There were eighty or a hundred of them and they had smelled the camp from some Indian village. They had quietly entered the camp while Buck and Spitz were fighting. When the two men sprang among them with heavy clubs they showed their teeth and fought back. The smell of food drove them mad. Perrault found one with its head buried in the food-box. His club landed heavily on the thin body, and the food-box was turned upside down on the ground. In a moment

twenty of the hungry beasts were rushing for the bread and meat. They did not pay any attention to the clubs that fell upon them. They cried and howled under the rain of blows, but did not stop struggling till the last piece of bread had been eaten.

While this was happening, the surprised team-dogs had jumped out of their nests and were attacked by the fierce visitors. Buck had never seen such dogs before. It seemed as if their bones would come through their skins. Although they were thin, they were so mad with hunger that they were very frightening. It was impossible to stop them. The team-dogs were driven back against the cliff. Buck was attacked by three of the dogs, and in a moment his head and shoulders were cut and bleeding. The noise was frightful. Billee was crying as usual. Dave and Sol-leks, covered with blood from several wounds, were fighting bravely side by side. Joe was attacking the dogs like a devil. Once, his teeth closed on the front leg of one of the dogs, and he bit down through the bone. Pike, the one who was always pretending to be ill, jumped on the wounded animal, breaking its neck, with a quick movement of his teeth. Buck got one of the dogs by the throat, and was covered with blood when his teeth sank through the skin. The warm taste of it in his mouth made him become even fiercer. He threw himself upon another, and at the same time felt teeth sink into his own throat. It was Spitz, attacking him from the side.

After Perrault and François had cleaned out their part of the camp, they hurried to save their dogs. The hungry attackers ran away before them, and Buck shook himself free. But it was only for a moment. The two men

were forced to run back to save the food, and the hungry dogs returned to the attack on the team. Billee sprang through the circle of dogs and ran away over the ice. Pike and Dub followed him, with the rest of the camp-dogs behind. As Buck got ready to spring after them, he saw Spitz out of the corner of his eye. Spitz was rushing upon him with the intention of throwing him off his feet. Once off his feet and under that crowd of hungry dogs, there was no hope for Buck. But he gathered up his strength and stood firm. Then he ran after the other team-dogs out on the lake.

Later, the nine team-dogs gathered together and looked for a safe place to rest in the forest. Though they were not pursued, they were in a bad state. Each of them was wounded in four or five places, while some were wounded very badly indeed. Dub was badly hurt in a back leg; Dolly, the last dog added to the team at Dyea, had a badly torn throat; Joe had lost an eye; and Billee, whose ear was bitten into small pieces, cried all the night. When it was daylight, they walked slowly back to camp. Their attackers had gone, and the two men were angry. Half of their food supply was lost. The attackers had even bitten through the sledge ropes and the covers. In fact, nothing had escaped them; they had eaten everything that it was at all possible to eat.

"Ah, my friends," François said softly when he looked over his wounded dogs, "perhaps so many bites will make you mad dogs. Perhaps you are all mad dogs. What do you think, Perrault?"

Perrault shook his head doubtfully. With four hundred miles still between him and Dawson, he could not bear the thought that madness might break out among his dogs.

After two hours' hard work, the wounded team was on its way again. They struggled painfully over the hardest part of the journey.

The Thirty Mile River was wide open: its wild water was not frozen. There was ice only in the quiet places near the sides. Six days of tiring work were needed to cover those thirty terrible miles. And terrible they were, for every foot of them was gained only at the danger of loss of life to dog and man. Perrault, who was trying to find the way, broke through the ice bridges many times. He was saved only by the long stick he carried. He held it in such a way that it fell each time across the hole made by his body. But it was very cold indeed. Each time Perrault fell through the ice he had to build a fire and dry his clothes in order to stay alive.

Nothing frightened Perrault. It was because nothing frightened him that he had been chosen to carry the government mail. He passed through all kinds of danger, struggling on from dim daylight to dark. He walked round the shores of the great river on ice that started to crack under foot. It was so thin that they dared not stop. Once, the sledge broke through the ice, with Dave and Buck. The two dogs were half-frozen and almost drowned by the time they were pulled out. The usual fire was necessary to save them. They were thickly coated with ice. The two men made them run so close around the fire that they were nearly burnt.

At another time Spitz went through, pulling the whole team after him up to Buck. Buck pulled backwards with all his strength, his front feet on the edge and the ice cracking all around. But behind him was Dave, also pulling backwards, and behind the

sledge was François pulling as hard as he could.

Again, the ice broke away before and behind, and there was no escape except up the cliff. Perrault surprised everyone by climbing the cliff. Every sledge rope and piece of harness was tied into a long rope. The dogs were pulled up, one by one, to the top of the cliff. François came up last, after the sledge and load. Then came the search for a place to descend. They descended at last with the aid of the rope, and night found them back on the river only a quarter of a mile further on.

By the time they reached good ice, Buck was tired out. The rest of the dogs were in the same condition. But Perrault pushed them late and early to make up lost time. The first day they covered thirty-five miles to the Big Salmon River; the next day thirty-five more to the Little Salmon; the third day forty miles, which brought them well up towards a place called Five Fingers.

Buck's feet were not so firm and hard as the feet of many other dogs. All day long he walked about in great pain. Once camp was made, he lay down like a dead dog. Even though he was hungry, he would not move to receive his amount of fish, which François had to bring to him. Also, François rubbed Buck's feet for half an hour each night after supper, and used the tops of his own warm shoes to make four shoes for Buck. This was a great comfort, and Buck caused even Perrault to smile one morning—when François forgot the shoes. Buck lay on his back, with his four feet waving in the air, and refused to move without them. Later his feet grew hard, and the worn-out shoes were thrown away.

At the Pelly one morning, as they were harnessing

up, Dolly suddenly went mad. No one had ever taken much notice of her before. She showed her madness by a long, heart-breaking wolf howl that filled every dog with fear. Then she sprang straight for Buck. He had never seen a dog go mad, nor did he have any reason to fear madness. But he knew that here was something terrible, and fled from it.

He raced straight away, with Dolly one jump behind. She could not gain on him, so great was his terror. Nor could he leave her, so great was her madness. He ran through the wooded part of the island, came down to the lower end, crossed over some rough ice to another island, reached a third island, turned back to the main river, and started to cross it. And all the time, though he did not look, he could hear her growling with rage just one jump behind.

François called to him a quarter of a mile away and he ran back, still one jump in front. He put all his faith in François, hoping that he would save him. François held the axe ready in his hand. As Buck shot past him, the axe fell down upon mad Dolly's head.

Buck lay down against the sledge, tired out, crying for breath, helpless. This was Spitz's chance. He sprang upon Buck. Twice his teeth bit into Buck and cut down to the bone. Then François's whip descended, and Buck watched Spitz receive the worst whipping he had ever seen.

"That Spitz is a devil," said Perrault. "Some day he will kill Buck."

"Buck is like two devils," said François. "I know this for sure. I watch that Buck all the time and I know! Listen! Some day Buck will get really angry and eat up Spitz: eat him all up. Sure! I know."



*The whip descended*

From then on it was war between Spitz and Buck. Although Spitz was the lead-dog and master of the team, he felt danger from this strange Southland dog. And Buck was certainly strange to him, for he had known many Southland dogs but not one had shown itself to be worth his respect in camp and on the journeys. They were all too soft; they died from the hard work, the cold, and hunger. Buck was different. He alone suffered and never complained; he alone succeeded and proved himself as strong and wild as any other dog. Buck was dangerous because the man with the club had knocked all blind courage out of him. Buck was especially good at deceiving people and he was able to wait calmly to get what he wanted.

The fight for leadership was sure to come. Buck wanted it. He wanted it because it was his nature. He was caught by that nameless pride of the north—that pride which keeps dogs struggling on until they die. It is the pride which leads them to die joyfully in the harness and breaks their hearts if they are cut out of the harness. This was the pride of Dave and Sol-leks. It was the pride which laid hold of them as soon as they left the camp, changing them from unfriendly beasts into hard-working and eager creatures. It was the pride that kept them going all day and dropped them at night when camp was set up. This was the pride that bore up Spitz and made him bite the sledge-dogs who made mistakes and were lazy. Also, it was this pride that made Spitz fear Buck as a possible lead-dog. And this was Buck's pride, too.

He stood up to Spitz and protected the dogs who had made mistakes. And he did it calmly and firmly. One

night there was a heavy snowfall, and in the morning Pike, the lazy dog who was always pretending to be ill, did not appear. Pike was safely hidden in his nest under a foot of snow. François called him and searched for him without success. Spitz was wild with anger. He ran through the camp, smelling and digging in every possible place. He growled so fiercely that Pike heard and shook in his hiding-place.

When Spitz at last found Pike and flew at him, Buck flew, with equal anger, between the two dogs. It was so unexpected that Spitz was thrown backwards and off his feet. Pike, who had been shaking with fear, gained courage at this event and sprang upon Spitz. Buck also sprang upon Spitz. But François brought his whip down upon Buck with all his strength. This failed to drive Buck away, and the thick end of the whip was used. Buck was knocked backwards and he was whipped again and again.

In the days that followed, Buck still continued to defend the other dogs against Spitz. But he did it in secret, when François was not there. The other dogs began to lose their respect for Spitz and even disobey him. Dave and Sol-leks remained faithful, but the rest of the team went from bad to worse. Things no longer went right. There was a lot of noisy quarrelling. Trouble was always present, and at the bottom of it was Buck. He kept François busy, for François now lived in fear of the life-and-death struggle between the two dogs: he knew this struggle must take place sooner or later. On more than one night the sounds of quarrelling among the other dogs caused him to leave his bed, fearing that Buck and Spitz were fighting.

But there was no suitable chance, and they reached

Dawson one cold afternoon with the fight still to come. There were many men and dogs in Dawson, and Buck found them all at work. It seemed the natural order of things that dogs should work. All day they swung up and down the main street in long teams. Their bells still sounded in the night as they went by. They pulled loads of wood, carried things up to the mines, and did all kinds of work which horses did in the Santa Clara Valley. Here and there Buck met Southland dogs, but most of the dogs were the wild wolf kind. Every night, regularly, at nine, at twelve, at three, they all howled. It was a strange song of the night, and it was Buck's delight to join in it.

With the northern lights shining coldly above, or the stars dancing, and the land frozen under its covering of snow, this song of the dogs put into words the pain of living. It was an old song, old as life itself—one of the first songs in a younger world in a day when songs were sad. The sorrow of thousands of years was in this song, which moved Buck so strangely. When he howled, it was with the pain of living that was the pain of his wild fathers. When he cried, it was with the fear and mystery of the cold and dark, the fear and mystery which his wild fathers had felt long ago. When he felt that mystery and lifted his head and howled at the stars, he had gone back through time to the beginnings of life.

Seven days after they had arrived at Dawson, they dropped down a steep bank to the Yukon Trail, and set out for Dyea and Salt Water. Perrault was carrying mail which was even more important than that which he had brought to Dawson. Also, the travel-pride caught hold of him, and he intended to make the fastest journey of the year. Several things favoured him in this. The week's

rest had made the dogs fresh again and put them in good condition. Their journey was easier. In two or three places the police had arranged stores of food for dog and man, and Perrault was travelling without many things to carry.

They reached the place called Sixty Mile, which is a fifty-mile run, on the first day. The second day saw them coming up the Yukon well on their way to Pelly. But such splendid running was gained only with great difficulty on the part of François. Buck had destroyed the spirit of the team. The team was no longer like one dog pulling the sledge. Buck led the dogs into all kinds of wrong-doing. Spitz was no longer greatly feared. The old fear and respect departed. Pike stole half a fish from him one night, and ate it under the protection of Buck. Another night Dub and Joe fought Spitz. Even Billee, the good-natured, was less good-natured. Buck never came near Spitz without growling angrily. In fact, he began to use his strength to frighten Spitz and he walked proudly up and down before Spitz's very nose.

The breaking down of respect and order made the dogs quarrel more than ever among themselves. At times the camp was full of their howls. Dave and Sol-leks alone remained the same, though they were easily made angry by the quarrelling. François shouted and stamped about in the snow in useless anger and tore his hair. He whipped the dogs, but it was of little use. As soon as his back was turned, they were quarrelling again. He supported Spitz with his whip, while Buck helped the rest of the team. François knew that Buck was the cause of all the trouble, and Buck knew that he knew. But Buck was too clever ever again to be caught. He worked hard, for the work had

become a delight to him. But it was a greater delight to start a fight among his friends.

One night after supper, Dub found a rabbit. The rabbit was too quick for him and escaped. In a second the whole team was pursuing the rabbit. There was a camp of the Northwest Police a hundred yards away, with fifty dogs: they all joined the pursuit. The rabbit ran down the river and then turned off into a small bay. It ran lightly on top of the snow, while the dogs forced their way through the snow by their great strength. Buck led the pack—sixty dogs—but he could not gain. He raced on, crying eagerly, his splendid body springing forward in the white light of the moon. And jump by jump, the rabbit ran in front of him.

The old spirit which at certain times drives men out from the big cities to the forests and plains to hunt and shoot things, the love for blood, the joy to kill—all this was Buck's. He was running at the head of the pack, hunting the wild thing down, the living meat. He would kill it with his own teeth and wash his mouth in warm blood.

There is a great joy which marks the highest point of life. This joy comes when one is most alive. Yet the fact of being alive is completely forgotten. This joy comes to the artist who forgets himself in what he is doing. It comes to the soldier who refuses to run away from a losing battle. And it came to Buck, leading the pack, howling like a wolf, running after the food that was alive and that fled before him through the moonlight. Buck was mastered by the sheer joy of life, expressing itself in movement, flying under the stars and over the dead ground beneath.

But Spitz, cold and always calm, left the pack and cut

across a narrow neck of land. Buck did not know of this, and as he ran after the rabbit, he saw another and larger shape spring from the bank of the river in front of the rabbit. It was Spitz. The rabbit could not turn. As Spitz's white teeth broke the rabbit's back in mid-air, it cried out as loudly as any dying man may cry out. At the sound of this, all the pack behind Buck raised a cry of delight.

Buck did not cry out. He did not stop himself, but drove in upon Spitz, shoulder to shoulder, so hard that he missed the throat. They rolled over and over in the snow. Spitz gained his feet almost as though he had not been thrown over. He bit Buck down the shoulder and jumped clear. Twice his teeth came together, like a steel trap, as he backed away.

In a second Buck knew it. The time had come. It was a fight to the death. As they circled about, growling angrily, ears laid back, carefully watching each other, Buck felt that he had known this scene before. He seemed to remember it all—the white woods, and earth, and moonlight, and the joy of battle. A ghostly calm hung over the whiteness and silence. There was not the faintest movement of air. Nothing moved, not even a leaf. The breath of the dogs rose slowly in the cold air. They had soon eaten the rabbit, these dogs that were really wolves. Now they were drawn up in a circle. They, too, were silent, their eyes shining and their breath moving slowly up in the air. To Buck it was nothing new or strange—it was a scene of old time. It was as though it had always been, the usual way of things.

Spitz had fought many times before. From Spitzbergen through the Arctic, and across Canada, he had gained command over all kinds of dogs. His anger was fierce, but

it was never blind. Even when he was mastered by his strong feelings to tear and destroy, he never forgot that his enemy felt the same way. He never rushed till he was prepared to receive a rush; he never attacked till he had first defended that attack.

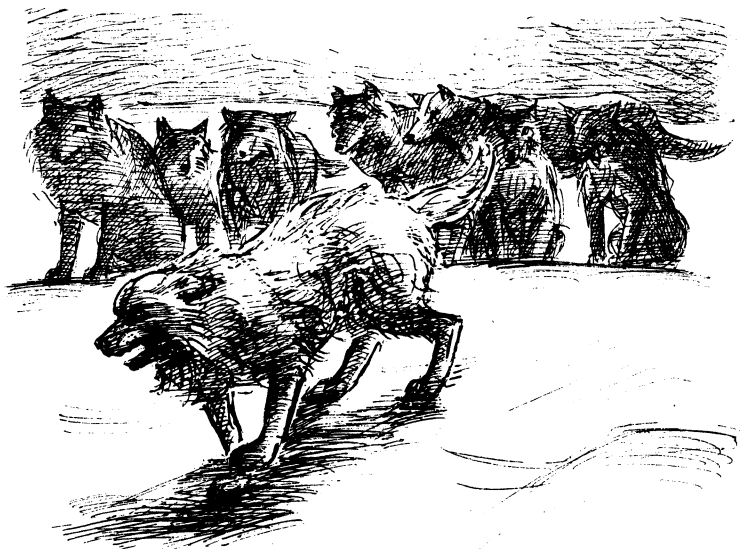
Buck tried without success to bite the neck of the big white dog. Whenever his sharp teeth struck for the softer places, they were met by the teeth of Spitz. Tooth hit tooth, and lips were cut and covered with blood, but Buck could not succeed in his attacks. Then he warmed up and rushed for Spitz many times. Time and time again he tried for the snow-white throat. Each time and every time Spitz cut him and got away. Then Buck began to rush, as though for the throat. Suddenly drawing back his head and turning in from the side, he drove his shoulder at the shoulder of Spitz to throw him over. But instead, Buck's shoulder.



was cut each time as Spitz sprang lightly away.

Spitz was not touched, while Buck was covered with blood and breathing hard and fast. Hope was leaving Buck. All the time the silent, wolfish circle waited to finish off the dog which went down. As Buck grew short of breath, Spitz started rushing, and he made it difficult for Buck to stand. Once Buck went over, and the whole circle of sixty dogs started up. But he jumped to his feet, almost in mid-air, and the circle sat down again and waited.

But Buck possessed something that helped towards greatness—imagination. He fought naturally without thinking, but he could fight with his head as well. He rushed as though attempting the old shoulder trick, but at the last moment he went low to the snow and in. His teeth closed on Spitz's left front leg. There was the sound



of breaking bone, and Spitz faced him on three legs. Three times Buck tried to knock him over; then he repeated the trick and broke the right front leg. Though full of pain and helpless, Spitz struggled madly to keep up. He saw the silent circle, with shining eyes and tongues hanging out. He saw them closing in upon him as he had seen other circles close in upon beaten fighters in the past. But this time he was the one who was beaten.

There was no hope for him. Buck could not turn aside from the task. Mercy was a thing for gentler lands. He prepared for the last rush. The circle had moved slowly in till he could feel the breath of the dogs on his body. He could see them, beyond Spitz and to either side, ready for the spring, their eyes fixed upon him. Something seemed to stop all movement. Every animal stood still as though turned to stone. Only Spitz moved as he tried to walk back and forth, growling fiercely as though to frighten off death. Then Buck sprang in and out. The dark circle moved forwards as Spitz disappeared from view.

Buck stood and looked on, the successful leader who had made his kill and found it good.

## Four

### *THE NEW LEADER*

“Eh? What did I say? I spoke the truth when I said that Buck was like two devils.”

This was what François said next morning when he discovered Spitz missing and Buck covered with wounds. He drew him to the fire and by its light pointed them out.

“That Spitz fought very fiercely,” said Perrault, as he

examined the cuts on Buck's body.

"And that Buck fought even more fiercely," François answered. "And now we can travel faster. No more Spitz, no more trouble!"

While Perrault loaded the sledge, François began to harness the dogs. Buck walked up to Spitz's old place as leader. But François did not notice him and brought Sol-leks to the place at the front of the team. In his judgment, Sol-leks was the best lead-dog left. Buck sprang upon Sol-leks in great anger, driving him back and standing in his place.

"Eh? eh?" François cried. "Look at that Buck. He has killed Spitz, and he wants to take his job."

"Go away, Buck!" he cried, but Buck refused to move.

François took Buck by the neck. Though Buck growled angrily, François pulled him to one side and put Sol-leks back. Sol-leks did not like it, and showed plainly that he was afraid of Buck. François meant to keep Sol-leks at the front, but when he turned his back Buck again took the place of Sol-leks, who was very willing to go.

François was angry. "Now, by God, I'll fix you!" he cried, coming back with a heavy club in his hand.

Buck remembered the fat man in the yard, and walked slowly back. He did not attempt to attack when Sol-leks was once more brought forward. But he walked round in a circle just beyond the range of the club, growling with fierce anger. While he circled he watched the club so as to move quickly away if François threw it. He had become wise in the way of clubs.

François went about his work. He called to Buck when he was ready to put him in his old place in front of Dave. Buck drew back two or three steps. François followed him

and he again drew back. After some time of this, François threw down the club, thinking that Buck feared being hit. But Buck refused to obey. He wanted, not to escape being hit, but to be the leader of the team. This was his right. He had won it and he would not be satisfied with less.

Perrault helped François. The two men ran after Buck for nearly an hour. They threw clubs at him. He moved out of the way. They shouted at him and cursed him and his fathers and mothers before him. But Buck answered their shouts with angry growls and kept out of their reach. He did not try to run away, but went around and around the camp. He showed plainly that he would come in and be good when his desire to lead was answered.

François sat down and scratched his head. Perrault looked at his watch and spoke angrily. Time was flying, and they should have started off an hour ago. François scratched his head again. He shook it and smiled at Perrault. Perrault moved his shoulders in a sign that they were beaten. Then François went up to where Sol-leks stood and called to Buck. Buck laughed, as dogs laugh, yet stayed a few feet away from them. François put Sol-leks back in his old place. The team stood harnessed to the sledge in a line, ready to go. There was no place for Buck except at the front. Once more François called, and once more Buck laughed and kept away.

“Throw down the club,” Perrault commanded.

François threw down the club and Buck walked in. He swung around into place at the head of the team. His harness was put on; the sledge started off, and they hurried out on to the frozen river.

Though François had valued Buck highly in the

past, he soon found that Buck was even better than he had thought. At once Buck took up the duties of leading. When judgment was needed and quick thinking and quick acting, he showed himself even better than Spitz.

But Buck was best at giving the law and making the other dogs live up to it. Dave and Sol-leks did not mind the change of leader. It was none of their business. Their business was to work hard pulling the sledge. So long as Buck did not touch them, they did not care what happened. Billee, the good-natured, could lead for all they cared, so long as he kept order. The rest of the team, however, had got out of order during the last days of Spitz: they were very surprised now that Buck began to make them work hard.

Pike, who pulled behind Buck and who never really did any work, was quickly shaken for being lazy. Before the end of the first day he was pulling more than ever before in his life. The first night in camp, Joe, the unfriendly one, was beaten until he began to cry out for mercy: Buck simply lay on top of him.

The team began to improve immediately. Once more the dogs ran as one dog in front of the sledge. Soon two new dogs, Teek and Koonah, were added. The speed with which Buck trained them was a big surprise to François.

"I've never seen such a dog as that Buck!" he cried. "No, never! He's worth one thousand dollars, by God! Eh? What do you say, Perrault?"

And Perrault agreed. He was beating the record time for the journey, and he was gaining day by day.

The snow-covered ground was in excellent condition: it was very hard and there was no new-fallen snow. It was

not too cold. The men rode and ran by turn, and the dogs were kept going all the time.

There was a lot of ice over the Thirty Mile River; they covered in one day the same distance that had before taken them ten days. In one run they travelled sixty miles from the foot of Lake Le Barge to the White Horse Rapids. They flew quickly over seventy miles of lakes. On the last night of the second week they passed over White Pass and dropped down to Skaguay and to the sea.

It was a record run. Each day for fourteen days they had travelled about forty miles. For three days Perrault and François walked up and down the main street of Skaguay, throwing their chests out with pride. Everyone asked them to drink, and the team received much attention from a respectful crowd of dog-drivers in the town. Then three or four bad men attempted to steal money from the town, were killed, and public interest turned from the dogs to these men. Next came orders from the government. François called Buck to him, threw his arms around him, and wept over him. And this was the last of François and Perrault. Like other men, they passed out of Buck's life.

In company with twelve other dogs Buck started back on the long journey to Dawson. It was no light running now, nor record time, but hard work each day, with a heavy load behind. This was the mail train, carrying news from the world to the men who sought gold under the shadow of the North Pole.

Buck did not like it, but he bore up well to the work. He took pride in it like Dave and Sol-leks, and he made sure that the other dogs did their fair share of work whether they took pride in it or not. It was not at all an in-

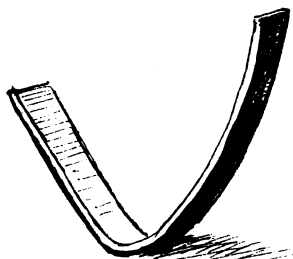
teresting life: one day was very like another. At a certain time each morning the cooks got up, fires were built, and breakfast was eaten. Then, while some got everything ready to take on the journey, others harnessed the dogs. They were off an hour or so before dawn. At night, camp was made. Some set up the little tents, others cut firewood and branches for the beds, and others carried water or ice for the cooks. Also the dogs were fed. This was the best part of the day to the dogs, though it was also good to stand around for an hour or so with the other dogs after the fish was eaten. There were fierce fighters among them. Buck gained respect after three battles with the fiercest. In future, when he became angry and showed his teeth, they got out of his way.

Best of all Buck loved to lie near the fire, looking dreamily at the burning wood. Sometimes he thought of Judge Miller's big house in the sun-kissed Santa Clara Valley and the other dogs. But more often he remembered the man with the club, the death of Curly, the great fight with Spitz, and the good things he had eaten or would like to eat. He never felt eager to return home. The Sunland was very dim and far away, and such memories had no power over him. The memories of his ancient family had far more power: he seemed to know about things he had never seen before. Old feelings became alive again.

Sometimes as he lay in front of the fire, it seemed to him that he was looking at another fire. And there seemed to be a very different man in front of him. This other man had shorter legs and longer arms. The hair of this man was long, and his head went straight back from the eyes. This man made strange sounds, and seemed very much

afraid of the darkness. He looked into the darkness and held in his hand a stick with a heavy stone tied to the end. He wore almost no clothes: a rough and burnt skin hung part way down his back, but on his body there was much hair. In some places, across the chest and shoulders and down the outside of the arms and legs, the hair was very thick and knotted. He did not stand upright: his body bent forwards and his legs bent at the knees. He was able to spring about almost like a cat; he moved carefully and quickly like someone who lived in fear of things seen and unseen.

At other times this hairy man sat by the fire with his head between his legs and slept. On such occasions his arms rested on his knees, and he held his hands above his head. And beyond that fire, in the darkness, Buck could see many pairs of bright coals: he knew that these were the eyes of wild beasts. And he could hear the sound of their bodies moving near him, and the noises they made in the night. And dreaming there by the Yukon



*bent*

bank, with lazy eyes looking at the fire, these sounds and sights of another world made the hair rise along his back and stand on end across his shoulders and up his neck. When he gave a low cry or growled softly, the cook would shout at him "Hey, Buck, wake up!" At once the other world would disappear and he would see the real world again. Then he got up and pretended that he had been asleep.

It was a hard journey: the heavy work of pulling the mail wore them down. They were very tired and weak and thin when they reached Dawson. They should have ten days' or a week's rest at least. But after two days in Dawson, they went back along the Yukon, loaded with letters for the outside world. The dogs were tired and the drivers were always complaining; to make matters worse, it snowed every day. This meant that the snow-covered ground was soft, and it was harder for the dogs to pull the sledge. Yet the drivers were always fair and did their best for the animals.

Each night the dogs were attended to first. They ate before the drivers ate. No man went to sleep before he had examined the feet of the dogs which he drove. But their strength went down. Since the beginning of the winter they had travelled eighteen hundred miles, pulling sledges all the time. Eighteen hundred miles make even the strongest dog grow weak. Buck bore up to it all. He kept the other dogs up to their work though he, too, was very tired. Billee cried often in his sleep each night. Joe was more unfriendly than ever, and Sol-leks never allowed anyone to come near him.

But it was Dave who suffered most of all. Something

had gone wrong with him. He became unfriendly and was easily made angry. When camp was set up, he at once made his nest in the place where his driver fed him. Once out of the harness and down, he did not get on his feet again until they were ready to set off the next morning. Sometimes, when the sledge suddenly stuck in the ice, Dave would cry out with pain. The driver examined him, but could find nothing. All the drivers became interested in what was happening to him. They talked about it during meals and before going to bed. One night they talked for a long time. Dave was brought from his nest to the fire. He was pressed till he cried out many times. Something was wrong inside, but they could find no broken bones and could not understand his illness.

Soon Dave was so weak that he was falling again and again as he pulled the sledge. He was taken out of the team so that he could rest and run free behind the sledge. Though he was sick, Dave did not like being taken out of the team. He cried sadly when he saw Sol-leks being put in his place, for Dave had great pride in his work and, though he was almost dying, he could not bear to see another dog doing his work.

When the sledge started, Dave struggled in the soft snow at the side of the sledge and attacked Sol-leks with his teeth. He rushed against him and tried to throw him off into the soft snow on the other side. All the time he was crying with grief and pain. The men tried to drive him away with the whip. Dave took no notice of it and the men couldn't bear to strike harder. He refused to run quietly behind the sledge, where the snow was hard and it was easy. Instead, he continued to struggle at the side in

the soft snow. At last he fell and lay where he fell, crying unhappily as the long train of sledges passed by.

With the last of his strength he ran along behind till the train of sledges made another stop. Then he struggled past the sledges to his own, and stood at the side of Sol-leks. His driver waited a moment to get a light for his pipe from the man behind. Then he returned and started his dogs. They set off quickly and easily; then they turned their heads and stopped in surprise. The driver was surprised, too; the sledge had not moved. He called his friends to see the sight. Dave had bitten through the harness and was standing in front of the sledge in his proper place.

He begged with his eyes to remain there. The driver was puzzled. His friends said "A dog can break its heart if it is not allowed to do its work." Since Dave was dying, the drivers thought that it would be a mercy for him to die in his proper place in front of the sledge. So he was put in the harness again. Though more than once he cried out with pain, he pulled proudly as in the past. Several times he fell down; once the sledge ran onto him and hurt one of his bad legs.

But he succeeded in pulling the sledge till they reached camp. His driver made a place for him by the fire, but the next morning he was too weak to travel. He tried to walk to his driver but fell. Then he moved slowly on his stomach towards the sledge. He first moved his front legs forward and drew up his body a few inches. His strength left him: he lay on the snow. That was the last the other dogs saw of him. But they could hear him howling with grief till they passed out of sight behind some trees.

Here the sledges stopped. One of the men slowly walked back to the camp which they had left. The other men ceased talking. A shot rang out. The sledges moved once more. But Buck knew, and every dog knew, what had happened behind the trees.

## Five

### *THE JOURNEY OF DEATH*

The Salt Water Mail, with Buck and his companions pulling it, arrived at Skaguay thirty days after leaving Dawson. The dogs were in a poor state; they were worn out. Buck's weight of one hundred and forty pounds had gone down to one hundred and fifteen. The rest of his companions, though lighter dogs, had lost more weight. Pike, who had often pretended to have a hurt leg, now really did have a hurt leg. Sol-leks could no longer walk properly and Dub was suffering from a painful shoulder.

They all had painful feet. They could no longer spring and run as they used to be able to do. Their feet fell heavily on the ground, shaking their bodies and making the day's travel more tiring. There was nothing the matter with them except that they were tired out: they were 'dead tired'. It was not the same as being tired from working too hard: it is possible to get better from this kind of tiredness in a few hours. It was the dead-tiredness which comes after months of hard work and slow loss of strength. They had not any power to get better. All their strength

had been used, the last least bit of it. Every part of their body was tired, dead tired. And there was a reason for it. In less than five months they had travelled twenty-five hundred miles. During the last eighteen hundred miles they had had only five days' rest. When they arrived at Skaguay they were on their last legs: they had reached the end of their strength. They could hardly pull the sledge. They were only just able to keep out of the way of the sledge when it was going downhill.

"Run on, poor feet," the driver shouted kindly when they ran down the main street of Skaguay. "This is the last. Then we'll get one long rest. One very long rest."

The drivers expected a long rest. They themselves, had covered twelve hundred miles with two days' rest: they deserved a rest. But there were so many men who had rushed into the Klondike that the mail was becoming very great. Also, the men had orders. New dogs were to take the places of those who were tired and useless. The useless ones were to be sold.

Three days passed, by which time Buck and his companions found how really tired and weak they were. Then, on the morning of the fourth day, two men came along and bought them at a very low price. The men addressed each other as 'Hal' and 'Charles'. Charles was a man between forty and fifty, with weak and watery eyes and a weak lip. Hal was a young man of nineteen or twenty. He had a big gun and a hunting-knife on his belt. This belt was the most important thing about him: it showed that he was hard and without feelings. Both men were very much out of place. The reason for their presence in the North is one of those mysteries that cannot be understood.

Buck heard the men talking and saw the money pass between them. He knew then that the mail-train drivers were passing out of his life as Perrault and François had done. When Buck and his companions were driven to the new owners' camp, he saw that everything was dirty and in disorder. Also he saw a woman. The men called her 'Mercedes'. She was Charles's wife and Hal's sister—a nice family party.

Buck watched them with a certain fear as they began to take down the tent and load the sledge. They worked very hard but they did the work badly. The tent was rolled so badly that it was three times as large as it should have been. The tin plates were put away unwashed. Mercedes talked all the time and tried to give the men advice. When they put a clothes-bag on the front of the sledge, she said that it should go on the back. When they had put it on the back and covered it over with other bags, she discovered that there were other articles which she had forgotten to put in the clothes-bag.

Three men from a neighbouring tent came out and looked on, smiling at one another.

"You've already got a good load," said one of them, "and I wouldn't take that tent along if I was you."

Mercedes threw up her hands in alarm. "How could I travel without a tent?"

"It's spring, and you won't get any more cold weather," the man replied.

She shook her head firmly. Charles and Hal put the last things on top of the big load.

"Do you think the sledge will go?" one of the men asked.



*Everything was dirty and in disorder*

"Why shouldn't it?" asked Charles rather angrily.

"Oh, that's all right, that's all right," said the man quickly. "I was just wondering, that's all. It seemed rather heavy."

Charles turned his back and tied the ropes as well as he could—which was not at all well.

"And of course the dogs can walk along all day with that load behind them," said a second man.

"Certainly," said Hal with freezing politeness, swinging his whip. "Mush!" he shouted. "Mush on there!"

The dogs sprang forwards, pulled hard for a few moments, then stopped. They were unable to move the sledge.

"The lazy beasts, I'll show them," he cried, preparing to strike them with the whip.

But Mercedes cried, "Oh, Hal, you mustn't." She caught hold of the whip and pulled it from him. "Poor dogs! Now you must promise you won't be hard with them for the rest of the journey."

Her brother laughed. "What do you know about dogs?" he said. "I wish you'd leave me alone. They're lazy. You've got to whip them to make them do anything. That's their way. You ask anyone. Ask one of those men."

Mercedes looked at them; her face showed how much she hated the sight of pain.

"They're weak as water," answered one of the men. "They're worn out, that's what's the matter. They need a rest."

"They'll not get a rest," said Hal; and Mercedes said "Oh!" in pain and sorrow.

But she rushed at once to the defence of her brother. "Never mind that man," she said. "You're driving our

dogs, and you do what you think best with them."

Hal's whip fell upon the dogs. They threw themselves forwards, dug their feet into the hard snow, got low down to it, and used all their strength. The sledge did not move an inch. After two efforts, the dogs stood still, breathing hard. Hal was whipping them fiercely when Mercedes once more spoke. She dropped on her knees before Buck, with tears in her eyes, and put her arms around his neck.

"You poor, poor dogs," she cried. "Why don't you pull hard? Then you wouldn't be whipped." Buck did not like her, but he was feeling too unhappy to struggle against her.

One of the men who was looking on now spoke up. He had been trying to hold back his anger but could not do so any longer.

"I don't care at all what happens to you, but I do care about the dogs. You can help them a great deal by breaking the ice around that sledge. It's frozen fast in the ice. Throw your weight against it and break it out."

A third attempt was made to move the sledge. But this time Hal followed the advice and pushed his weight against the sledge. The heavy sledge slowly moved forwards. Buck and his companions struggled under the rain of blows from Hal's whip. After a hundred yards the path turned and dropped steeply into the main street. Only an experienced man could have kept the heavy sledge upright, and Hal was not such a man. As they swung on the turn, the sledge fell over and half its load came off. The dogs did not stop. The sledge was much lighter now and it moved quickly on its side behind them. They were angry because they had been treated badly.

Buck was very angry indeed. He started to run and the team followed his lead. Hal cried "Stop! stop!" but they took no notice. He was pulled off his feet. The sledge ran over him, and the dogs hurried on up the street, causing much amusement as the rest of the things on the sledge fell along the main street.

Some kind-hearted men caught the dogs and gathered up all the things that had fallen off the sledge. They also gave advice. They told Hal and Charles to travel with half the load and twice the number of dogs. Hal and his sister and Charles listened unwillingly, set up their tent and examined their load again. They pulled out tinned food: that made men laugh, for tinned food in the North is a thing to dream about. "Leave all these clothes behind," said one of the men who laughed and helped. "Throw away that tent, and all those plates—who's going to wash them, anyway? Good Lord, do you think you're travelling on a railway train?"

And so everything that was not needed was thrown away. Mercedes cried when her clothes-bags were put on the ground and article after article was thrown out. She held her hands about her knees, rocking back and forth broken-heartedly. She said she would not go an inch. In the end she dried her eyes and began to throw out even necessary clothes. When she had finished with her own clothes, she went through the men's clothes, throwing them out.

The load was now cut in half, but it was still very heavy. Charles and Hal went out in the evening and brought back six more dogs. When these were added, they brought the team up to fourteen. But the new dogs were not very good. They did not seem to know anything. Buck

and his companions did not like them. Though Buck quickly taught them what not to do, he could not teach them what to do. They did not like pulling the sledge, and they were puzzled and frightened by the strange Northland and by the way in which they were treated.

Although the new dogs were useless and the old team worn out by twenty-five hundred miles of journeying, the two men were quite bright and pleasant. And they were proud, too. They felt they were travelling properly now, with fourteen dogs. They had seen other sledges depart for Dawson, or come in from Dawson, but they had never seen a sledge with so many as fourteen dogs. But there was a reason why fourteen dogs should not pull one sledge: one sledge could not carry the food for fourteen dogs. Charles and Hal did not know this. They had worked the journey out with a pencil, so much food to each dog, so many dogs, so many days. Mercedes looked over their shoulders and moved her head to show that she understood:—it all seemed so very simple.

Late next morning Buck led the long team up the street. There was no life in him or his fellows. They were starting dead tired. Buck had covered the distance between Salt Water and Dawson four times. The knowledge that he was facing the same journey once more made him angry. His heart was not in his work; nor was the heart of any dog.

Buck felt that they could not depend upon these two men and the woman. They did not know how to do anything. As the days went by, it became clear that they could not learn. They were careless in everything: they had no order. It took them half the night to make a camp, and half the morning to load the sledge. They always

loaded it so badly that they had to stop often during the rest of the day in order to arrange the load again. Some days they did not travel even ten miles. On other days they were unable to get started at all. And they never succeeded in covering more than half the distance which they had intended to cover.

It was only to be expected they should not have enough dog-food. But they made it worse by giving the dogs too much food during the first part of the journey. The new dogs were always hungry and when the old, worn-out dogs pulled weakly, Hal decided that they should be given more food. He doubled the amount they received each day. And this was not all. Mercedes, with tears in her pretty eyes, stole fish for the dogs and fed them secretly. But it was not food that Buck and his companions needed: it was rest. And though they were travelling only slowly, the heavy load they pulled took away all their strength.

Then came the time when the dogs were not given enough food. One day Hal discovered that his dog-food was half-gone and the distance was only quarter covered. No more dog-food could be obtained by any means at all. So he cut down even the usual amount and tried to increase the day's travel. It was a simple matter to give the dogs less food, but it was impossible to make the dogs travel faster. Also, their own failure to start earlier in the morning stopped them from travelling longer hours. They not only did not know how to work the dogs, but they did not know how to work themselves.

The first to go was Dub. Though he was a poor thief who was always getting caught, he had been a faithful worker. His wounded shoulder went from bad to worse

till in the end Hal shot him. The new dogs were given Dub's food, but it was far from enough. They could not stay alive on the small amount of food they were given each day. One by one, all six died.

By this time the three people had completely forgotten the gentle spirit of the Southland. Arctic travel became too real and hard for them. Mercedes ceased weeping over the dogs, for she was now too occupied with weeping over herself and with quarrelling with her husband and brother. They were never tired of quarrelling: their unhappiness caused them to grow angry with one another, and their anger only increased their unhappiness. There is a wonderful calm spirit which comes to men who work hard and suffer greatly and yet remain sweet of speech and kindly. This calm spirit did not come to these two men and the woman. They had no idea of such a spirit. They were full of pain; their bones hurt and their very hearts hurt. Because of this, they became sharp of speech, and hard words were first on their lips in the morning and last at night.

Charles and Hal quarrelled when Mercedes gave them a chance. Each believed that he did more work than the other. Sometimes Mercedes agreed with her husband, sometimes with her brother. The result was a long family quarrel. The quarrel always began about such a small matter as cutting a few sticks for the fire and then it passed on to the rest of the family—fathers, mothers, uncles, people thousands of miles away, and some of them dead. It was beyond understanding that Hal's views on art, or what his uncle did, should have anything to do with the cutting of a few sticks of firewood. But while the quarrel was taking place, the fire remained unbuilt.

the camp half set up, and the dogs unfed.

Mercedes was pretty and soft and had always been treated respectfully. But she was now treated without any respect at all by her husband and brother. It was her custom to be helpless. They complained, so she made them suffer. She no longer considered the dogs. Because she was tired, she began to ride on the sledge all the time. She was pretty and soft, but she weighed one hundred and twenty pounds—too much to be pulled by the weak and hungry animals. She rode for days, till the dogs fell and the sledge stood still. Charles and Hal begged her to get off and walk, but all the time she wept and said what terrible men they were.

On one occasion they took her off the sledge by main strength. They never did it again. She let her legs fall from under her and sat down in the snow. They went on their way, but she did not move. After they had traveled three miles, they took the things off the sledge, came back for her and put her on the sledge again.

Because of their great unhappiness they did not care about how much the dogs suffered. Hal believed that others must learn to grow hard. He had begun by telling his sister and Charles about this and he ended by trying to beat it into the dogs with a club. At last the dog-food gave out. The only thing Hal could get for the dogs was a few pounds of horse-skins.

And through it all Buck struggled along at the head of the team as in a bad dream. He pulled when he could. When he could no longer pull, he fell down and remained down till blows from whip or club drove him to his feet again. The hair on his body was no longer beautiful:

it hung down and was stuck together with dried blood in the places where Hal's club had struck him. Every bone in his body could be seen through the skin. It was heartbreaking; but Buck's heart could not be broken. The fat man in the yard had proved that.

It was the same with Buck's companions. There were seven dogs all together. In their very great unhappiness, they did not feel the bite of the whip or the club. The pain that was caused by the beating was far off. They were not half living, or quarter living. They were simply so many bags of bones in which there was a faint trace of life. When they were allowed to stop, they dropped down in front of the sledge like dead dogs and the trace of life seemed to go. And when the club or whip fell upon them, the trace of life returned and they struggled to their feet.

One day Billee, the good-natured, fell and could not rise. Hal no longer had his gun, so he took the axe and knocked Billee on the head as he lay in front of the sledge. Then he cut the dead body of the dog out of the harness and pulled it to one side. Buck saw this, and his companions saw it; they knew that this thing was very close to them. On the next day another dog went, and only five of them remained: Joe, now too worn out to be unfriendly; Pike, hurt and hardly able to walk; Sol-leks, the one-eyed, still faithful to the hard work but sad that he had so little strength with which to pull; Teek, who had not travelled so far that winter and who was now beaten more than the others; and Buck, still at the head of the team but blind with weakness half the time and following the path by the feel of his feet.

It was beautiful spring weather but neither dogs nor people noticed it. Each day the sun rose earlier

and set later. It was daylight by three in the morning, and it did not become dark until nine at night. The sun shone the whole long day. The ghostly winter silence had given way to the great spring sound of awakening life. The sound of spring arose from all the land, full of the joy of living. It came from the things that lived and moved again, things which had been like dead things and which had not moved during the long months of winter. Leaves were beginning to appear on the trees again and all kinds of small creatures came forth into the sun.

From every hillside came the music of running water. The ice that bound the land down was breaking away. It ate away from beneath; the sun ate it from above. Air-holes formed, cracks in the ice sprang and spread apart, while much of the thin ice fell in one body into the river. And in the middle of this awakening life the two men, the woman, and the dogs struggled on.

With the dogs falling, Mercedes weeping and riding, Hal shouting and Charles dreaming of his home in the Southland, they entered John Thornton's camp at the mouth of White River. When they stopped, the dogs dropped down as though they had all been struck dead. Mercedes dried her eyes and looked at John Thornton. Charles sat down on part of a tree to rest. He sat down very slowly. Hal did the talking. John Thornton was finishing an axe which he had made. He listened, gave simple replies and a few words of advice when it was asked. He knew what kind of people they were and he was certain that his advice would not be followed.

"They told us up above that the ice was disappearing

and that the best thing for us to do was to stop for a time," Hal said after Thornton had advised them to take no more chances on the ice. Hal continued, "They told us we couldn't reach White River, and here we are."

"And they told you true," John Thornton answered. "The ice may break at any moment. Only fools would have attempted to do it. I tell you straight: I wouldn't go on that ice for all the gold in Alaska."

"That's because you're not a fool, I suppose," said Hal. "All the same, we'll go on to Dawson." He held out his whip. "Get up there, Buck! Hi! Get up there! Mush on!"

Thornton knew that it was useless to try to reason with a fool.

But the team did not get up at the command. It had long since become necessary to whip the team in order to make them start. John Thornton bit his lips. Sol-leks was the first to struggle to his feet. Teek followed. Joe came next, barking with pain. Pike tried hard to stand. Twice he fell over when he was half up. On the third attempt he succeeded in rising. Buck made no effort. He lay quietly where he had fallen. The whip bit into him again and again, but he neither cried out nor struggled. Several times Thornton moved, as though to speak; but he changed his mind. His eyes became wet and, as the whipping continued, he walked up and down.

This was the first time Buck had failed: this in itself was enough to make Hal very angry. He changed the whip for a club. Buck refused to move under the rain of heavier blows which now fell upon him. Like his companions, he was hardly able to get up; unlike them, he had made up his mind not to get up. He had a feel-

ing that some terrible accident was about to happen. This feeling had been strong when he pulled in to the bank, and it had not departed from him. He felt this terrible thing would happen out there on the ice where his master was trying to drive him. He had suffered so greatly and he was so far gone that the blows did not hurt much. As they continued to fall upon him, the faint trace of life within nearly disappeared. He knew that he was being beaten, but it was as though from a great distance. The last feelings of pain left him. He no longer felt anything, though very faintly he could hear the sound of the club upon his body. But it was no longer his body; it seemed so far away.

And then, suddenly, making a cry that was more like the cry of an animal, John Thornton sprang upon the man who was hitting Buck with the club.

John Thornton sprang upon Hal. Hal was thrown backwards, as though struck by a falling tree. Mercedes cried out in fear. Charles looked on, dried his watery eyes, but did not get up to help Hal.

John Thornton stood over Buck, too angry to speak.

"If you strike that dog again, I'll kill you," he at last said.

"It's my dog," Hal replied, drying the blood from his mouth as he came back. "Get out of my way, or I'll fix you. I'm going to Dawson."

Thornton stood between him and Buck and showed that he had no intention of getting out of the way. Hal drew his long hunting-knife. Mercedes cried out. Thornton hit the back of Hal's hand with a stick, knocking the knife to the ground. He hit his hands again as Hal tried to pick it up. Then he picked it up himself and quickly



*'If you strike that dog again, I'll kill you!'*

cut Buck's harness.

Hal had neither the strength nor the spirit to fight any more. He was holding his sister in his arms. Buck was too near dead to be of further use in pulling the sledge. A few minutes later they started out from the bank and went down the river. Buck heard them go and raised his head to see. Pike was leading; then came Joe, Teek and Sol-leks. They were walking with great difficulty. Mercedes was riding the loaded sledge. Hal guided, and Charles walked along in the rear.

As Buck watched them, Thornton knelt beside him and with tough, kindly hands searched for broken bones. He could find nothing wrong except for many wounds and a state of great hunger. By the time he had finished examining Buck, the sledge was a quarter of a mile away. The dog and the man watched it moving slowly along over the ice. Suddenly, they saw its back end drop down, as into a small hole. They heard Mercedes crying out in terror. They saw Charles turn and make one step to run back. Then a large piece of ice broke and dogs and people disappeared. A wide and deep hole was all that was to be seen.

John Thornton and Buck looked at each other.

"You poor devil," said John Thornton, and Buck ran his tongue along his new master's hand.

## Six

### *FOR THE LOVE OF A MAN*

When John Thornton's feet froze during the winter just before he met Buck, his friends had made him comfortable and left him to get well. They themselves went on up the river. John Thornton was still walking with slight difficulty at the time he saved Buck, but the continued warm weather made his feet completely well again. And here Buck lay by the river bank through the long spring days, watched the running water, and listened lazily to the songs of birds. Here Buck slowly won back his strength.

A rest feels very good after one has travelled three thousand miles, and Buck even grew a little lazy as his wounds healed and his body grew strong again. Indeed, they were all lazy—Buck, John Thornton, and Skeet and Nig, as they waited for the small boat to come to carry them down to Dawson. Skeet was a small dog who soon made friends with Buck. She had acted almost like a doctor to Buck; and, as a mother cat washes her young, so she washed Buck's wounds. Regularly, each morning after he had finished his breakfast, she attended to Buck. Nig, equally friendly, was a large black dog, with eyes that laughed.

To Buck's surprise these dogs showed no ill-feeling towards him. They were as kind and as friendly as John Thornton himself. As Buck grew stronger, they got him to join in all sorts of silly games; even John Thornton

joined in these games. In this way Buck got well again and entered a new life. He felt love for the first time. He had never experienced it at Judge Miller's place down in the sun-kissed Santa Clara Valley. There had been only respect and friendship between Buck and the Judge. But it had taken John Thornton to bring out love that was strong and burning.

This man had saved his life; but, further, he was the perfect master. Other men looked after their dogs from a feeling of duty and in the interests of business. John Thornton looked after his dogs as if they were his own children, because he could not help it. And he saw further. He never forgot a kind word; and to sit down for a long talk with them was his delight as much as theirs. He had a way of taking Buck's head roughly between his hands, and resting his own head upon Buck's. He would shake Buck back and forth, all the time calling him bad names which to Buck were love names. Buck knew no greater joy than this. At each pull back and forth it seemed that his heart would be shaken out of his body, for his joy was so great. And when John Thornton let him go, Buck sprang to his feet, his mouth laughing, his eyes showing his great love, and his throat moving with sounds to which he did not give voice. In that manner Buck remained without movement, so that John Thornton would cry, "God! you can almost speak!"

Buck expressed his love in a way which hurt. He often seized Thornton's hand in his mouth and bit it so fiercely that the mark of his teeth could be seen for some time afterwards. But Thornton knew that this was an expression of love, just as Buck understood that the rough words which Thornton used were really love words.

Although Buck went wild with happiness when Thornton touched him or spoke to him, he did not seek these signs of love. Unlike Skeet, who usually pushed her nose under Thornton's hand, or Nig, who rested his great head on Thornton's knee, Buck was happy to love at a distance. He lay hour after hour at Thornton's feet, eager and wide-awake. He looked up into Thornton's face, studying it and following with great interest each expression, every movement or change in his face. Or, he lay farther away, to the side or rear, watching the dim shape of the man and the occasional movements of his body. And often their feelings were so close that the strength of Buck's eyes as they looked at him caused John Thornton's head to turn around. Then he looked at Buck, without speech, his heart shining out of his eyes as Buck's heart had shone out.

For a long time, Buck did not like Thornton to get out of his sight. From the moment he left the tent to when he entered it again, Buck followed at his heels. He had had so many different masters since he had come to the Northland that there was a deep fear in him that no master would stay. He was afraid that Thornton would pass out of his life as Perrault and François and the others had passed out. Even in the night, in his dreams, this fear came to him. At such times, he shook off sleep and walked quietly through the cold to the tent. There he stood and listened to the sound of his master breathing.

But though Buck loved John Thornton deeply, the call of the wild, which the Northland had awakened in him remained alive. He was faithful and he loved John Thornton, but he kept his wildness. He was a thing of the wild, and he had come in from the wild to sit by

John Thornton's fire. Because of his very great love, he could not steal from this man, but he would at once steal from any other man, in any other camp.

His face and body were marked by the teeth of many dogs, and he fought as fiercely as ever. Skeet and Nig were too good-natured to quarrel—besides, they belonged to John Thornton. But the strange dog, no matter what it was like, quickly showed respect for Buck or found himself struggling for life against a terrible fighter. And Buck was without mercy. He had learned the law of the wild well; he used every trick he knew and he never drew back from an enemy whom he had started on the way to Death. He had learnt his lessons from Spitz, and from the chief fighting dogs of the police and mail; and he knew that there was no middle way. He must master or be mastered; to show mercy was weak. There was no such thing as mercy in the life of the first creatures on earth. Mercy was mistaken for fear, and such mistakes brought death. Kill or be killed, eat or be eaten, was the law. And this law, which had come down through the ages from the beginning of Time, was the law which Buck obeyed.

In some strange way Buck was older than the number of years he had lived. He joined the past with the present. He sat by John Thornton's fire, a broad-breasted dog with sharp white teeth and a long coat. But inside him were the spirits of all kinds of dogs, half-wolves and wild wolves, listening with him and telling him the sounds made by the wild life in the forest. These wild spirits directed his acts and even lay down to sleep with him when he lay down, dreaming with him and helping to form his dreams.

The spirits grew stronger and stronger in him, so that each day the world of man moved further from him. Deep in the forest a call was sounding. As often as he heard this call, he felt forced to turn his back upon the fire and the beaten earth around it. He felt something draw him into the forest, and on and on. He did not know where he was running, or why. The call commanded him to go on, deep in the forest. But as often as he reached the soft earth and the green shade, the love for John Thornton drew him back to the fire again.

Thornton alone held him. The rest of the world of men was as nothing. Other men might praise him or touch him; but he was cold under it all, and often he got up and walked away. When Thornton's friends, Hans and Pete, arrived on the long-expected boat, Buck refused to notice them till he learned that they were close to Thornton. After that, he did not mind them, but at the same time he showed no real feeling for them. They were the same kind of men as Thornton, living close to the earth, thinking simply and seeing clearly. Before the boat reached Dawson, they understood Buck and his ways.

Buck's love for Thornton seemed to grow and grow. He, alone among men, could put things upon Buck's back in the summer travelling. Nothing was too great for Buck to do when Thornton commanded.

One day the men and dogs were sitting on the top of a cliff, three hundred feet high. John Thornton was sitting at the edge, with Buck at his shoulder. An idea seized Thornton, and he drew the attention of Hans and Pete to what he was going to try. "Jump, Buck!" he commanded, moving his arm out and over the edge of the

cliff. The next moment he was struggling to hold Buck on the very edge of the cliff, while Hans and Pete were pulling them back to where it was safe.

"It's strange and almost unnatural," said Pete after it was over and they were able to speak again.

Thornton shook his head. "No, it is splendid, and it is terrible, too. Do you know it sometimes makes me afraid."

"I shouldn't like to be the man that lays hands on you while he's around," said Pete as he looked at Buck.

"By Jingo! I shouldn't either," Hans added.

Pete's fears were made real before the year had ended. They were at Circle City. "Black" Burton, an evil and unfriendly man, had been attempting to quarrel with someone at the bar when Thornton stepped between the two men. Buck was lying in a corner, watching everything his master did. Burton suddenly struck out straight from the shoulder. Thornton was knocked back and saved himself from falling only by catching hold of the bar.

Those who were looking on heard a deep growl. They saw Buck's body rise up in the air as he jumped for Burton's throat. The man saved his life by holding out his arm, but he was thrown backwards to the floor with Buck on top of him. Buck stopped biting the arm and drove in again for the throat. This time the man did not completely succeed in stopping Buck's attack, and his throat was cut open. Then the crowd was upon Buck, and he was driven off. But while a doctor examined the man's throat, Buck walked up and down, growling angrily, attempting to rush in, and being forced back by several clubs.

The men called a "miners' meeting" on the spot. They decided that the dog had enough reason to attack the man, and Buck was set free. But after that everyone knew the kind of dog Buck was, and from that day his name spread through every camp in Alaska.

Later on, towards the end of the year, Buck saved John Thornton's life in quite a different manner. The three men were taking a long and narrow boat down some dangerous rapids\*. Hans and Pete moved along the bank of the river, tying the rope of the boat from tree to tree. Thornton remained in the boat, helping with a long stick and shouting directions to the shore. Buck, who was on the bank, kept at the side of the boat, his eyes never off his master.

At an especially bad spot where there were dangerous rocks in the river, Hans untied the rope from one of the trees on the shore. While Thornton tried to move the boat out into the stream, Hans ran down the bank with the end of the rope in his hand, ready to tie it to the next tree. The boat had begun to be carried down the river when Hans pulled the rope to slow it down; but he pulled it too suddenly. The boat turned over and the bottom of it hit the bank. Thornton, who had been thrown clean out of the boat, was carried down the river towards the worst part of the rapids. The water flowed so quickly and wildly there that no swimmer could live.

Buck sprung in at once. At the end of three hundred yards he caught up with Thornton. When he felt him catch hold of his tail, Buck made straight for the bank, swimming with all his splendid strength. But the return towards the shore was slow; and they were being carried

quickly down the river. From below came the terrible sound of the water falling on the many rocks in the river. The water drew them towards this most dangerous part of the rapids with frightening force. Thornton knew that it was impossible to reach the shore. His body struck some rocks. He caught hold of the top of the third rock with both hands. He was no longer holding Buck now and above the noise of the water he shouted "Go, Buck! Go!"

Buck was carried on down the river, struggling hard, but unable to stop himself. When he heard Thornton's command a second time, he partly lifted himself out of the water, throwing his head high, as though for a last look. Then he turned towards the bank. He swam with all his great strength and was pulled out of the river by Pete and Hans just where the water began to flow over the worst of the rapids.



Pete and Hans knew that John Thornton could hold on to the wet rock only for a matter of minutes and they ran as fast as they could up the bank to a place far above where he was hanging on. They tied a rope to Buck's neck and shoulders and put him into the stream. Buck began to swim without any fear at all. But he did not swim straight enough into the stream. He discovered the mistake too late, when he saw Thornton a few yards away to one side. The fast-flowing water carried Buck past without allowing him a chance to help.

Hans at once pulled the rope, as though Buck were a boat. The rope pulled him under the water; and he remained under the water till his body struck against the bank and he was lifted out. He was half drowned. Hans and Pete threw themselves upon him, beating the



breath into him and the water out of him. He struggled to his feet and fell down. The faint sound of Thornton's voice came to them. Though they could not make out his words, they knew that he was very near death. The sound of his master's voice did something to Buck. He sprang to his feet and ran up the bank in front of the men to the place where they had put the rope round his neck and shoulders.

Again the rope was tied to Buck and he was put into the water. Again he started to swim, but this time straight into the stream. He had made one mistake, but he would not make a second mistake. Hans let out the rope. Buck swam straight out till he was on a line straight above Thornton. Then he turned and came down upon him. Thornton saw him coming. As Buck struck him with the whole force of the stream behind him, Thornton reached up and held both his arms around Buck's neck. Hans put the rope around the tree, and Buck and Thornton were pulled under the water. Unable to breath and striking against rocks, they moved in to the bank.

When Thornton awoke, he was lying on his stomach. Hans and Pete were moving their hands on his back in an attempt to get him breathing. John Thornton's first anxiety was for Buck, over whose lifeless body Nig was setting up a howl. Skeet was moving his tongue over the wet face and closed eyes. Thornton was himself hurt badly, but he carefully examined Buck's body, and found three broken bones.

"That settles the matter," he said. "We camp right here." And they camped right there, till Buck's bones had healed and he was able to travel.

That winter, at Dawson, Buck did another great deed, which made his name even more famous. This thing was especially pleasing to the three men; for it made it possible for them to start out on a long-desired journey into the untouched East where miners had not yet appeared. This is how Buck's great deed was brought about.

One day in the Eldorado Saloon a few men were talking with great pride about their best dogs. These men attacked Buck because of his record, and Thornton was firm in defending Buck. At the end of half an hour one man said that his dog could start a sledge with five hundred pounds and walk off with it; a second man said his dog could pull six hundred pounds; and a third, seven hundred.

"Pooh! pooh!" said John Thornton; "Buck can start a sledge with a thousand pounds on it."

"And break it out of the ice? And walk off with it for a hundred yards?" demanded one of the men, called Matthewson.

"And break it out of the ice, and walk off with it for a hundred yards," John Thornton said calmly.

"Well," Matthewson said slowly and clearly, so that all could hear. "I'll give you a thousand dollars if he can. If he can't, you'll owe me a thousand dollars. And there's my thousand dollars." As he spoke, he threw a small bag of gold dust upon the bar.

No one spoke. They waited to see if Thornton really meant what he had said. He could feel the warm blood rising up his face. His tongue had tricked him: he had talked without first thinking. He did not know whether Buck could pull a sledge with a thousand pounds on it: the great weight frightened him. He had a lot of faith

in Buck's strength and had often thought that he could pull such a load; but he had never faced the fact that it might really happen. The eyes of all the men were fixed upon him, silent and waiting. Further, he had not got a thousand dollars; nor had Hans or Pete.

"I've got a sledge standing outside now with twenty fifty-pound bags of flour on it," said Matthewson. "So don't let me stop you."

Thornton did not reply. He did not know what to say. He looked from face to face like a man who has lost the power of thought and is seeking somewhere to find the thing that will start it going again. The face of Jim O'Brien, an old friend, caught his eye. It seemed to wake him to do what he would never have dreamed of doing.

"Can you lend me a thousand dollars?" he asked, almost in a whisper.

"Sure," answered O'Brien, putting down a bag by the side of Matthewson's. "Though I've got only little faith, John, that the beast can do the trick."

All the men in the Eldorado went into the street to see the event. Several hundred men stood around the sledge a few yards away. Matthewson's sledge, loaded with a thousand pounds of flour, had been standing for two hours and it was frozen fast to the hard snow. No one believed that Buck could move the sledge. Thornton had been hurried into this matter, heavy with doubt. Now that he looked at the sledge itself with the regular team of dogs sitting in the snow in front of it, the more impossible the task appeared. Matthewson was very happy.

"I'll put another thousand down, Thornton. What do you say?"

Thornton's doubt was strong in his face, but his

fighting spirit had been moved—the fighting spirit that fails to see the impossible and can hear nothing but the noise of battle. He called Hans and Pete to him. The three men could gather together only two hundred dollars. This amount was all they had; yet they put it down without second thoughts.

The team of ten dogs was taken away, and Buck, with his own harness, was put in front of the sledge. He had caught the feeling which excited the crowd, and he felt that in some way he must do a great thing for John Thornton. He was in perfect condition; he weighed a hundred and fifty pounds and his body was full of strength and power. His coat shone like silk. The hair down the neck and across the shoulders seemed to lift with every movement, as though too much strength made each hair alive and busy. The great breast and heavy front legs were the right size for such a powerful body.

“Gad, sir! Gad, sir!” one man cried. “I offer you eight hundred for him now, sir; eight hundred just as he stands.”

Thornton shook his head and stepped to Buck’s side.

Mathewson shouted, “You must stand away from him.”

The crowd fell silent. Everybody agreed that Buck was a splendid animal, but twenty fifty-pound bags of flour appeared a very heavy load.

Thornton knelt down by Buck’s side. He took Buck’s head in his two hands and rested his own head on Buck’s. He did not shake Buck as he used to shake him in play; he did not speak soft love curses. But he whispered in his ear. “As you love me, Buck. As you love me,” was what he whispered.

The crowd was watching with curiosity. The thing was

becoming mysterious. As Thornton got to his feet, Buck seized his hand in his mouth, pressing in with his teeth and letting it free slowly, only half-willingly. It was Buck's way of answering—a way, not of speech, but of love. Thornton stepped back.

“Now, Buck,” he said.

Buck got ready in his harness. He stood the way he had learned to stand.

“Gee!” Thornton's voice rang out, sharp in the great silence.

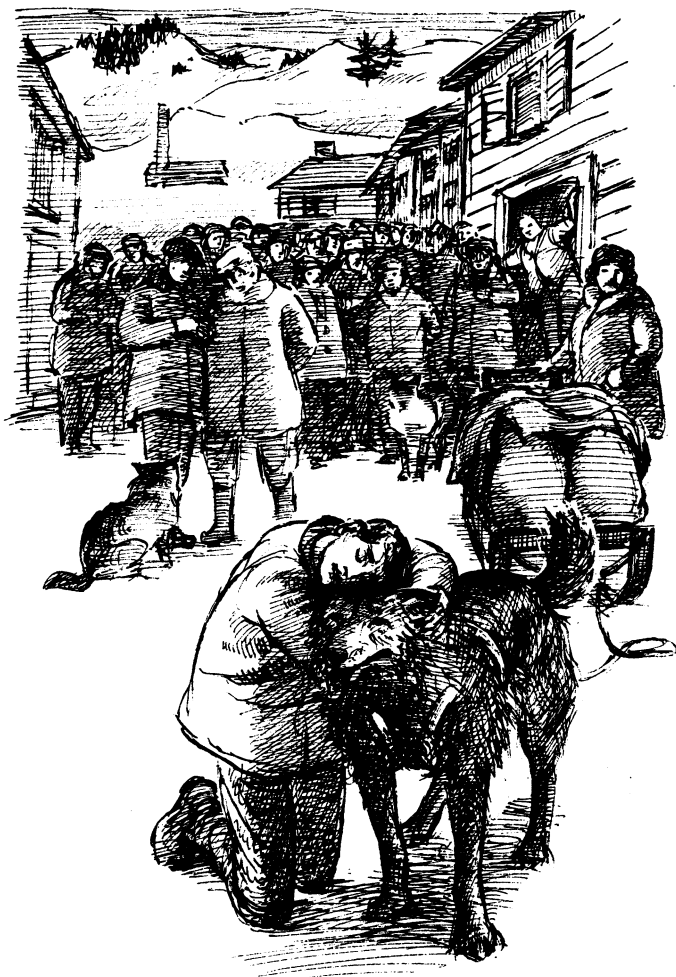
Buck swung to the right, ending the movement in a spring forwards. He stopped with the sudden pull of the harness. The load behind him shook. From under the sledge arose the sound of a sharp cracking of ice.

“Haw!” Thornton commanded.

Buck repeated the same movement, but this time to the left. The cracking grew louder and the sledge moved several inches to the side: it was broken out of the ice. Men were holding their breaths.

“Now, MUSH!”

Thornton's command cracked out like a shot from a gun. Buck threw himself forwards. His whole body was gathered together in the great effort. His great chest was low to the ground, his head forward and down, while his feet were flying like mad on the hard snow. The sledge swung a little to one side and shook. It half-started forwards. One of his feet missed the ground, and one man cried out. Then the sledge moved forwards in short, quick movements. But it never came to a dead stop again . . . half an inch . . . an inch . . . two inches . . . The short, quick movements now became one continuous movement, as the sledge gained speed and moved



*Thornton rested his own head on Buck's*

safely along.

Men began to breathe again, not knowing that for a moment they had ceased to breathe. Thornton was running behind, shouting happily to Buck. The distance had been measured off. As Buck drew near the firewood which marked the end of the hundred yards, the shouting began to grow and grow. As he passed the firewood and stopped at John Thornton's command, every man was shouting and throwing things in the air. Even Matthewson was excited. Men were shaking hands and talking loudly.

But Thornton fell on his knees beside Buck. Head was against head, and he was shaking him back and forth. Those who hurried up heard him cursing Buck, and he cursed him long and softly and with great love.

"Gad, sir! Gad, sir!" cried the man who had earlier offered to buy Buck for eight hundred dollars. "I'll give you a thousand for him, sir, a thousand, sir—twelve hundred, sir."

Thornton rose to his feet. His eyes were wet. The tears were running down his cheeks. "Sir!" he replied. "No, sir! You can go to the devil, sir. It's the best I can do for you, sir."

Buck seized Thornton's hand in his teeth. Thornton shook him back and forth. The people who were looking on drew back to a respectful distance: here was a friendship between man and dog that passed all understanding.

## Seven

### *BUCK HEARS THE CALL*

When Buck won sixteen hundred dollars in five minutes for John Thornton, he made it possible for his master to go on a journey with his two friends into the East to search for a lost mine. The history of the mine was as old as the history of the country. Men had sought it; few had found it; and there were more than a few who had never returned from the search. This lost mine was covered in mystery. No one knew of the first man who found it: the stories about the mine stopped before they got back so far. From the beginning there had been an old hut. Dying men had talked about it, holding in their hands rocks of gold different from all the known types of gold in the Northland.

But no living man had taken gold from the mine, and the dead were dead. Therefore, John Thornton and Pete and Hans, with Buck and six other dogs, started into the East on an unknown path to succeed in doing something that other men and dogs as good as themselves had failed to do. They travelled seventy miles up the Yukon, swung to the left into Stewart River, and kept until the river itself became a stream among the mountains.

John Thornton asked little of man or nature. He was unafraid of the wild. He could shoot what he wanted and eat when he pleased and as long as he pleased. As he was in no hurry, he hunted his dinner in the course of a day's travel. If he failed to find any food, he kept on

travelling, safe in the knowledge that sooner or later he would come to it. So, on this great journey into the East, dogs and men ate fresh meat.

To Buck the journey was full of endless delight: he loved this hunting, fishing, and wandering through strange places. For weeks at a time they travelled on, day after day; and for weeks they camped here and there, the dogs lying around idly and the men burning holes through ice and dirt in their search for gold. Sometimes they were hungry, sometimes they feasted like kings, according to their success in hunting. Summer arrived, and dogs and men carried loads on their backs, rowed across Blue Mountain lakes, and went up and down unknown rivers in narrow boats cut from the trees around them.

The months came and went, and back and forth they travelled through unknown country, where no men had been. They crossed mountains and dropped into warm valleys below. After summer they entered a strange lake-country, sad and silent, where there was no sign of life—only the blowing of cold winds, the forming of ice, and the sad sound of waves on the shores.

They wandered on through another winter. Once, they came upon an old path cut through the forest, and the Lost Hut seemed very near. But the path began nowhere and ended nowhere, and it remained a mystery. Who had made it and why had he made it? Another time they found part of an old hut which had been used for hunting. Among some clothes John Thornton found an old gun. And that was all—nothing else to tell them about the man who long ago had built the hut and left the gun there.

Spring came on once more, and at the end of all their wandering they never found the Lost Hut. But they did find a broad valley where the gold showed like yellow butter across the bottom of the stream. They sought no farther. Each day they worked brought them thousands of dollars in clean gold-dust and rocks of gold. And they worked every day. The gold was put into strong bags, fifty pounds of gold in each bag. The bags were then put on top of one another like firewood outside their small hut. They worked like giants day after day.

There was nothing for the dogs to do, except to pull in the meat which Thornton killed. Buck spent long hours dreaming by the fire. The picture of the short-legged hairy man came to him more often, now that there was little work to be done. And often, dreaming by the fire, Buck wandered with him in that other world which he remembered.

The chief thing of this other world seemed to be fear. When he watched the hairy man sleeping by the fire, head between his knees and hands held together above, Buck saw that he often awoke with fear. Then he looked into the darkness and threw more wood upon the fire. When they walked by the sea-shore, where the hairy man gathered shell-fish, he looked everywhere for hidden danger and was prepared to run like the wind at the first sign. They walked silently through the forest, with Buck at the hairy man's heels. Both were always ready for the first sign of danger, for the man could hear and smell as well as Buck could. The hairy man could spring into the trees and travel as fast as on the ground, swinging by his arms from branch to branch. In fact, he seemed as much at home

among the trees as on the ground; and Buck had memories of nights when the hairy man slept in the trees.

The Call of the Wild was close to these pictures of the hairy man: it caused Buck to feel a sweet joy and he was moved with strange desires. Sometimes he pursued the call into the forest, looking for it as though it was something which he could touch. He put his nose into the black soil where long grasses grew and barked with joy at the strong smell of the earth; or he sat for hours, as if hiding, behind fallen trees, awake to all that moved and sounded about him. Perhaps in this way he hoped to surprise this strange call which he could not understand. But he did not know why he did these various things. Something made him do them and he did not reason about them at all.

Strong feelings and desires seized him. He lay in camp, dreaming lazily in the heat of the day, when suddenly his head lifted and his ears stood up. He sprang to his feet and ran away, and on and on, for hours, through the forest and across open spaces. He loved to run down dry riverbeds, and to walk quietly and watch the bird life in the woods. For a day at a time he lay in the long grass where he could watch the wild birds. But especially he loved to run in the dim light of the summer nights, listening to the soft and sleepy whispers of the forest, reading signs and sounds as man may read a book, and seeking for the mysterious something that called—called, waking or sleeping, at all times, for him to come.

One night he suddenly sprang from sleep. The call came from the forest (or one note of it, for the call had many notes), clear as never before—a long-drawn howl.

The howl was like, yet unlike, any noise made by a dog. And Buck knew it as a sound which he had heard before. He sprang through the sleeping camp and in silence ran through the woods. As he drew closer to the cry he went more slowly, moving very carefully, till he came to an open place among the trees. Looking out, he saw a long, thin wolf, standing very upright with nose pointed to the sky.

He had made no noise, yet the wolf ceased howling and tried to discover his presence. Buck walked into the open, his body half bent and gathered together, his tail straight, his feet falling on the ground with great care. Every movement showed a strange mixture of angry power and a desire for friendship. But the wolf fled at the sight of him. He followed, springing wildly, in a great desire to catch up with the wolf. Buck forced the wolf into a small valley where there were several fallen trees: these stopped the wolf from escaping and it turned about. It growled fiercely and showed its teeth.

Buck did not attack, but walked round the wolf in a circle and made friendly advances. The wolf did not trust Buck and was afraid. Buck weighed three times more than the wolf, while the wolf's head only just reached Buck's shoulder. Watching his chance, the wolf ran away and Buck pursued once more. Again the wolf was caught because he was in poor condition. He ran till Buck's head was at the side of his body. Then he turned round ready to fight, only to run away again at the first chance.

But in the end Buck succeeded; for the wolf, finding that no harm was intended, put his nose close to Buck's nose. Then they became friendly and played together. After some time the wolf started off at an easy run in a manner which plainly showed that he was

going somewhere. He made it clear to Buck that he wanted him to come. So they ran side by side through the dim light, straight up the dry river-bed towards the foot of the mountains.

Then they came down into a flat country where there were great unbroken spaces of forest and many streams. Through these great unbroken spaces they ran on, hour after hour. The sun rose higher and the day grew warmer. Buck was wildly glad. He knew he was at last answering the call, running by the side of his brother towards the place where the call came. Old memories were coming upon him fast, and he was moved by them as he had been moved by them in his dreams. But this time he was no longer dreaming: everything was real. He had done this thing before, somewhere in that other and dimly remembered world. And he was doing it again now, running free in the open, with the untouched earth under his feet and the wide sky over his head.

They stopped by a stream to drink, and Buck suddenly remembered John Thornton. He sat down. The wolf started on towards the place from where the call came, then returned to him, put his nose to Buck's nose and tried to make Buck follow him. But Buck turned about and started slowly back. For an hour the wild brother ran by his side, howling softly. Then he sat down, pointed his nose to the sky, and howled. It was a sad howl. As Buck continued on his way back, he heard it grow fainter and fainter until it was lost in the distance.

John Thornton was eating his dinner when Buck ran into camp and sprang upon him, knocking him over and biting his hand. While Buck was showing his great love for his master, John Thornton shook Buck back and

forth and cursed him lovingly.

For two days and nights Buck never left camp and never let Thornton out of his sight. He followed him about at his work, watched him while he ate, saw him to bed at night and saw him get up in the morning. But after two days the call in the forest began to sound more powerful than ever. Buck could not forget his wild brother and the run side by side through the wide forest spaces. Once again he began to wander in the woods, but the wild brother came no more. Though he listened through long nights, the sad howl was never raised.

Buck began to sleep out at night, staying away from camp for days at a time. Once he went down into the land of the wide forest spaces and the many streams. He wandered there for a week, seeking without success for fresh signs of the wild brother. He killed his meat as he travelled and never seemed to tire. He fished in a broad stream and by this stream he killed a large black bear which had been blinded by insects and was running wildly through the forest helpless and terrible. Even so, it was a hard fight. And two days later, when he returned to the dead bear and found a dozen small animals quarrelling over it, he frightened them so much that they fled away like the wind. But they left behind two who would quarrel no more.

His desire for blood became stronger than ever before. He was a killer, a thing that killed to eat, living on the things that lived. And he killed alone, without help, by his own strength, living in a land where only the strong could live. Because of all this, he began to possess a great pride in himself. It showed itself in all his movements and in the way he carried himself. If it had not been for the

brown above his nose and above his eyes, and the piece of white hair that ran down the middle of his chest, he might easily have been mistaken for a gigantic wolf. His St. Bernard father had given him size and weight, but it was his shepherd mother who had given shape to that size and weight. His head was like the head of a wolf, only larger and broader.

Buck thought like a wolf and he had gained his experience in the fiercest of conditions; and all this made him as terrible a creature as any that wandered through the wild. Buck was an animal who lived only on meat, and he was in full flower, at the height of his strength and power. Every part of his body was alive. To sights and sounds and events which demanded action, he answered with a speed that surprised everyone. He could spring twice as quickly as any other dog to defend himself from attack or to attack. He saw the movement, or heard a sound, and answered before other dogs had seen or heard anything. He saw and thought and answered in the same moment. Life ran through him and filled every part of his body. It seemed, that there was not enough room for all the life that flowed through his body and that it would pour out over the world.

"There was never such a dog," said John Thornton one day, as they watched Buck marching out of camp.

They saw him marching out of camp, but they did not see the sudden and terrible change which took place as soon as he was in the forest. He no longer marched. At once he became a thing of the wild, moving softly like a cat. He was a passing shadow that appeared and disappeared among the shadows. He knew how to hide, to move on his stomach like a snake, and like a snake to

spring and strike. No animals were too quick for him. He killed to eat, not from pleasure alone; but he liked to eat what he killed himself.

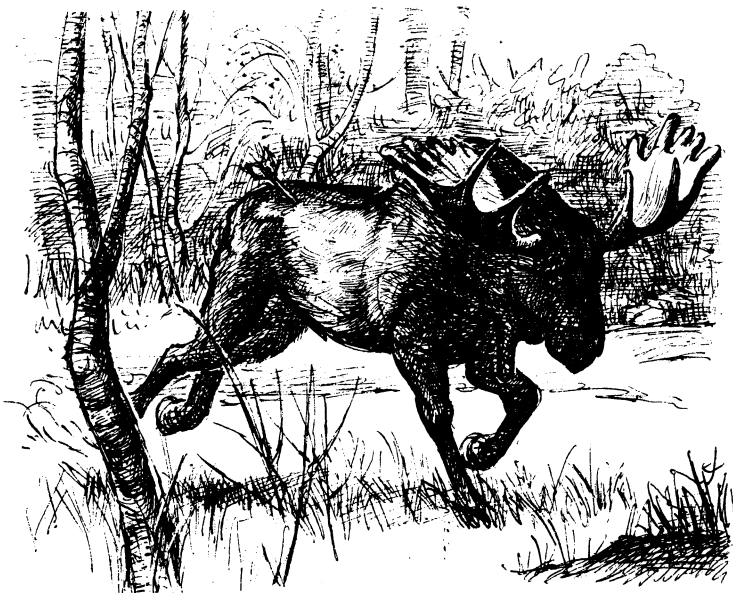
After summer had passed, the moose\* appeared, moving slowly down to meet the winter in the lower and warmer valleys. Buck had already killed a young moose which had wandered away from the others. Now he very much wanted to hunt larger moose. He came upon a band of twenty moose one day at the head of a small river. The moose had crossed over from the land of streams and forests. Chief among them was a great bull-moose. He was an angry beast; he stood over six feet from the ground; he was as terrible an animal as even Buck could desire to fight. Back and forth the bull threw his head. His small eyes burned with evil light, while he growled with anger at sight of Buck.

The feathered end of an arrow stuck out from the bull's side—the reason for his fierce anger. Buck at once knew what to do: he began to cut the bull out from the rest of the band. It was no easy task. He barked and danced about in front of the bull, just out of reach of the powerful head and the great feet which could have killed him with a single blow. The bull was unable to turn his back on Buck and go on, and became more and more angry. He charged Buck; Buck drew back, making the bull think that he could not escape. In this way he caused the bull to follow him. But when the bull was thus separated from his fellows, two or three of the younger bulls charged back upon Buck and helped the wounded bull to join the band again.

Wild animals know how to wait. They do not hurry. They wait for hour after hour till the right moment

comes; and then at last they strike. Buck knew how to wait. He stayed at the side of the band of moose, slowing down their march, making the young bulls angry, frightening the cows with their young, and driving the wounded bull mad with fierce but helpless anger. For half a day this continued. Buck attacked from all sides; he cut out the wounded bull as fast as it joined the others. All the moose became tired out. They could not wait so long as Buck could wait.

As the day continued and the sun dropped to its bed in the north-west, the young bulls grew less and less willing to go to the help of the old bull. The winter was driving them quickly to the valleys, and it seemed that they could never shake Buck off. Besides, it was not the life of the band of moose, or of the young bulls, that was in danger. The life of only one member was demanded.



This did not hold the same interest for them as their own lives did, and they became less willing to help the old bull.

As night fell the old bull stood with his head held low, watching the rest of the band continue on their rapid journey through the dim light. He could not follow, because in front of him jumped the terror which would not let him go. The great bull had lived a long, strong life, full of fight and struggle. At the end he faced death at the teeth of a creature whose head did not reach beyond his great knees.

From then on, night and day, Buck never left the old bull: he never gave it a moment's rest, never permitted it to eat the leaves of trees nor to satisfy his burning thirst in the narrow streams which they crossed. Sometimes the bull ran for a long time. At such times Buck did not



attempt to stop him, but followed easily, satisfied with the way the game was played; he lay down when the moose stood still, and attacked him fiercely when he tried to eat or drink.

The great head dropped more and more, as the bull grew weaker and weaker. He began to stand for a long time, with nose to the ground and ears that dropped without any sign of strength. And Buck found more time in which to get water for himself and in which to rest. At such moments, with his red tongue hanging out and with eyes fixed upon the big bull, Buck began to feel that a change was coming over the face of things. He could feel something new moving in the land. As the moose were coming into the land, other kinds of life were coming in. Forest and stream and air seemed to beat with their presence. The news of it was borne in upon him, not by sight, or sound, or smell, but by some other, deeper feeling. He heard nothing, saw nothing, yet knew that the land was different in some way; and that through it strange things were moving. And he decided that he would see what was happening after he had killed the old bull.

At last, at the end of the fourth day, Buck pulled the great moose down. For a day and a night he remained by the dead bull which he had killed, eating and sleeping. Then, rested, refreshed and strong, he turned his face towards camp and John Thornton. He broke into the long, easy run and went on, hour after hour, returning straight home through strange country, completely certain of the direction.

As he continued, he felt more and more the new movement in the land. There was life in it, different from the life which there had been through the summer. No

longer did he know this fact in some deep, mysterious way. The birds and animals talked about it and the very wind whispered it. Several times he stopped and drew in the fresh morning air in great breaths. It seemed to carry a message which made him run on with greater speed. He had the feeling that something terrible was happening, if it had not already happened. As he crossed the last stream and dropped down into the valley towards the camp, he ran with greater care.

Three miles away he came upon a fresh path that filled him with fear. It led straight towards camp and John Thornton. Buck hurried on, quickly and quietly: every sign told a story—all but the end of the story. His nose told him what had happened and he noticed the silence of the forest. The bird life had gone. The small creatures of the forest were hiding.

As Buck ran along like a silent shadow, his nose suddenly moved to the side as though a great force had pulled it. He followed the smell into a bush and found Nig. He was lying on his side, dead where he had pulled himself, an arrow sticking through his body.

A hundred yards farther on, Buck came upon one of the sledge-dogs which John Thornton had bought in Dawson. This dog was dying in great pain, and Buck passed around him without stopping. From the camp came the faint sound of many voices, rising and falling in a kind of song. Moving forwards on his stomach to the edge of the camp, Buck found Hans, lying on his face, with arrows sticking in his back. At the same moment Buck looked out at the place where the hut had been. He saw something that made his hair stand straight up on his neck and shoulders. A great feeling of anger conquered. He did

not know that he growled, but he growled aloud—terrible and fierce. For the last time in his life he allowed his powerful feelings to conquer his reason: it was because of his great love for John Thornton that he lost his head.

The Indians were dancing about the remains of the small hut when they heard a terrible cry and saw Buck rushing upon them. Never before had they seen an animal like him. Buck's only desire was to destroy them as he threw himself upon them. He sprang at the nearest man, who happened to be the chief of the Indians. In a second Buck's teeth had cut the man's throat wide open. He did not stop and, with the next jump, cut wide the throat of a second man. There was nothing the Indians could do. Buck sprang into the middle of them, never stopping in his destruction and moving so quickly that no arrows could hit him. In fact, his movements were so rapid and the Indians were so closely gathered together, that they shot one another with the arrows. One young hunter, in attempting to throw a spear at Buck, drove it through the chest of another hunter with such force that the point broke through the skin of the back and stood out beyond. Then the Indians turned and fled in terror to the woods, shouting out that the Evil Spirit had come.

And Buck really was like the Devil, pursuing them and pulling them down as they raced through the trees. It was a day the Indians would never forget. They ran far and wide over the country, and it was not until a week later that a few of them gathered together in a lower valley and counted their losses.

Tired of the pursuit, Buck returned to the camp. He found Pete where he had been killed in his bed in the first moment of surprise. On the earth there were the marks of

Thornton's last struggle. Buck smelt every mark down to the edge of the stream. Skeet lay by the edge of the stream, head and front feet in the water—faithful to the last. The water of the stream was not clear and hid what it contained; and it contained John Thornton. Buck knew this, for he had followed the marks into the water from which no other marks led away.

Buck stayed by the stream all day or wandered about the camp. He knew what death meant—the stopping of movement and the passing out and away from the lives of the living. And he knew John Thornton was dead. It left a great empty space in him, rather like hunger, but it was a space which food could not fill. At times, when he stopped to look at the dead bodies of the Indians, he forgot the pain of it. At such times he felt a great pride in himself—a pride greater than any he had yet experienced. He had killed man, the noblest creature of all; and he had killed in the face of clubs. He smelt the bodies with curiosity. They had died so easily. It was harder to kill a wild dog than them. He could beat them easily if it were not for their arrows and spears and clubs. From then on he would not be afraid of them except when they carried in their hands their arrows, spears, and clubs.

Night came on. A full moon rose high over the trees into the sky, lighting the land until the morning. And as night came, Buck became alive to a moving of the new life in the forest. He stood up, listening and smelling. From far away there came a faint, sharp cry, followed by other sharp cries. As the moments passed the cries grew closer and louder. Again Buck knew them as things heard in that other world which he could not forget. He walked to the centre of the open space and listened.

It was the call, the call with many notes: it was more commanding and more powerful than ever before. And as never before, he was ready to obey. John Thornton was dead. The last thing that tied him to the world of man was broken.

Hunting their living meat close behind the moose, the wolf pack had at last crossed over from the land of streams and forests and entered Buck's valley. Into the open space where the light of the moon fell, they poured in a stream of silver. And in the centre of the open space stood Buck, still and waiting their coming. They were filled with fear; he stood so still and large. Not one of them moved for a moment. Then the bravest one sprang straight for him. At once Buck struck, breaking the wolf's neck. Then he stood, without movement as before. Three others tried it; and one after the other they drew back, blood pouring from cut throats or shoulders.

This was enough to throw the whole pack forwards, crowded together and so eager to pull Buck down that they were unable to think clearly. Buck's splendid quickness was a great help to him. Turning on his back legs and with his mouth quickly opening and closing, he was everywhere at once. But, in order to stop them from getting behind him, he was forced back, down to the stream. He moved along the bank to a place which the men had made in the course of mining. Here he stood to face the wolves, protected on three sides with nothing to do but face the front.

In this place Buck faced the wolves so well that at the end of half an hour they drew back. The tongues of

all were hanging out; their long white teeth showed cruelly white in the light of the moon. Some were lying down with heads raised and ears held forwards; others stood on their feet, watching him; and still others were drinking water from the stream. One wolf, long and thin and grey, advanced with great care, in a friendly manner. Buck recognised the wild brother with whom he had run for a night and a day. He was howling softly, and, as Buck howled, they touched noses.

Then an old wolf, thin and with many marks of battle on his body, came forward. Buck moved his lips in preparation for an angry growl, but smelt noses with him. Then the old wolf sat down, pointed his nose at the moon, and broke out the long wolf howl. The others sat down and howled. And now the call came to Buck clearly. He, too, sat down and howled. When this was over, he came out from the bank and the pack crowded around him, smelling in a manner that was half friendly and half fierce. The leaders cried out and sprang away into the woods. The wolves followed, crying out together. And Buck ran with them, side by side with the wild brother, crying out as he ran.

Here we may well end the story of Buck. Not many years later the Indians noted a change in the wolves. Some of the wolves were seen with brown marks on their heads and a line of white down the centre of the chest. But this was not all: the Indians tell of a Ghost Dog that runs at the head of the pack. They are afraid of this Ghost Dog, for it is greater than they are. It steals from their camps in fierce winters, it takes the food out of their traps, kills their dogs, and is not afraid of their bravest hunters.

The story grows worse. There are hunters who fail to

return to camp. There have also been hunters who have been found with their throats cut wide open and with giant wolf marks about them in the snow. After each summer, when the Indians follow the movement of the moose, there is a certain valley which they never enter. And there are women who become sad when stories are told about how the Evil Spirit came to choose that valley to live in.

In the summers there is one visitor to that valley, of which the Indians do not know. It is a great wolf which is like, and yet unlike, all other wolves. He crosses alone from the smiling land of forests and comes down into an open space among the trees. Here a yellow stream flows from old bags and drops into the ground, with long grasses growing through it and hiding its yellow from the sun. Here he dreams for a time, howling once, long and sadly, before he departs.

But when the long winter nights come on and the wolves follow their meat into the lower valleys, Buck may be seen running at the head of the pack through the silver light of the moon. He appears gigantic above his fellows, and a long howl rises from his great throat as he sings a song of the younger world, which is the song of the pack.

## QUESTIONS

- I. 1. Why were thousands of people rushing to the North? 2. What kind of dogs did they want? 3. Where did Buck live?
1. What kind of dog was Buck's father? 2. When was gold discovered in the Klondike? 3. Who was Manuel?
1. Where did Manuel take Buck? 2. What did he put round Buck's neck? 3. What happened when Buck first growled?
1. What did Buck bite? 2. For how much had Manuel sold Buck? 3. Where was Buck thrown after the rope was removed?
1. What did Buck do when the four men entered? 2. What did the men do then? 3. Where was Buck taken from the ship?
1. For how long did Buck travel on the train? 2. What did he do when anyone came to him? 3. What did he need most of all? 4. What was the one thing that made Buck glad?
1. Where was the cage carried? 2. What did the fat man bring out? 3. Where did the four men go?
1. What happened when Buck was springing on the man? 2. How many times did Buck charge at the man? 3. Which blow gave Buck the greatest pain?
1. What was the man reading? 2. What did he touch? 3. What did Buck later eat?
1. What lesson had Buck learnt? 2. What happened to one of the dogs? 3. What did the strangers sometimes take away with them?
1. How much did Perrault pay for Buck? 2. What did he know when he looked at Buck? 3. What was the other dog's name? 4. On what did they travel?
1. What did Spitz steal? 2. Who struck Spitz? 3. What was the only thing Dave wanted?

1. What did Buck notice about the weather? 2. What was falling on the ground? 3. How did Buck examine it?
2. 1. What was the first day like? 2. What was it necessary always to be? 3. How was Curly's face cut open?
1. How many dogs watched the fight? 2. How did they stand round the two dogs? 3. How did the big dog stop Curly's rush?
1. What did François put on Buck? 2. What work did Buck do? 3. What did Dave do when Buck did wrong?
1. What was Billee's one fault? 2. What was Joe's fault? 3. Why was Spitz forced to stop his attack on Joe?—"Because—." 4. What does Sol-leks mean? 5. What did Sol-leks not like?—"He did not like to be——."
1. What happened when Buck entered the tent? 2. What idea came to Buck? "He would return and ——." 3. What suddenly happened when Buck was circling the tent? 4. Whom did Buck find under the snow?
1. What was the fear that ran through Buck? 2. What did Buck immediately do?—"He sprang——."
1. Where did Dave pull? 2. Why was Buck placed between Dave and Sol-leks? 3. How did Perrault honour Buck?
1. Why were thousands of gold-seekers building boats? 2. What did Perrault usually do? 3. On what did Perrault pride himself?
1. Why did the other dogs receive less fish than Buck did? 2. How did Buck stop other dogs from taking his food? 3. What did Buck see Pike doing? 4. What did Buck do the following day?
1. What did the first act of stealing show? "That Buck was fit to——." 2. What was Buck able to forget? 3. Why did Buck steal secretly?
1. How good did Buck's hearing become? 2. How did Buck break the ice over the water hole? 3. What was the best thing he could do?
1. What became alive again in Buck? 2. To what time did Buck remember back? 3. What came to him naturally? 4. He had come into——. What?
3. 1. What did Buck keep away from? 2. What did Spitz guess? 3. What did Spitz try to start?

1. Where did they camp? 2. Why had Buck made his nest? 3. What did Buck find when he returned to his nest?
1. Who saw Buck and Spitz? 2. How many dogs had entered the camp? 3. From where had they come? 4. What drove them mad?
1. How many dogs attacked Buck? 2. What was Joe doing? 3. What made Buck become even fiercer? 4. Who attacked Buck from the side?
1. Why were Perrault and François forced to run back to the camp? 2. What was Spitz trying to do? 3. Where did the team-dogs spend the night?
1. What did François say when he saw his wounded dogs? "Perhaps so many bites——." 2. How did Perrault save himself when he fell through the ice? 3. What had he to do each time after he had fallen through the ice?
1. What once happened to Dave and Buck? 2. What did the two men make them do? 3. How did Perrault surprise everyone?
1. What caused Buck to walk about in great pain? 2. What did François make for Buck? 3. What did Buck do one morning when François forgot the shoes?
1. Who went mad? 2. Whom did she attack? 3. What happened when Buck ran past François?
1. What did Spitz do to Buck? 2. Why was Buck strange to Spitz? 3. What was Buck especially good at?
1. What was sure to come? 2. What kept dogs struggling until they died? 3. Whom did Buck protect? 4. Where was Pike hidden?
1. What did Buck do when Spitz flew at Pike? 2. What did François do to Buck? 3. What did the other dogs begin to lose? 4. François now lived in fear of——. Of what?
1. What town did they reach? 2. What did the dogs do regularly every night? 3. What had Buck done when he howled at the stars?
1. What did Perrault intend to do? 2. What had the police arranged? 3. What had Buck destroyed? 4. What did Buck begin to do—"To use ——."
1. What made the dogs quarrel? 2. Which dogs did not change? 3. What was a greater delight than work to Buck?

1. What did Dub find? 2. Who joined in the pursuit? 3. What was Buck mastered by?
1. What did the pack do when Spitz killed the rabbit? 2. What did Buck suddenly know? 3. What did the dogs do after eating the rabbit?
1. What happened when Buck tried to bite Spitz's neck? 2. What did Spitz do when Buck sprang at his shoulder? 3. What happened once when Buck fell over?
1. What did Buck possess? 2. What did he do at the last moment after rushing at Spitz? 3. What did Buck feel on his body? 4. "Buck sprang in and out". What happened then?
4. 1. What did François discover next morning? 2. Where did Buck go? 3. Why did he spring at Sol-leks?
1. What did François do? 2. What happened when François turned his back? 3. What did Buck do when he saw François holding a club? 4. Why did François throw down the club?—"He thought that——." 5. Buck did not want to——, but to——.
1. What did Buck show plainly that he would do? 2. Where did François put Sol-leks? 3. What did Perrault tell François to do?
1. What did François soon find out about Buck? 2. At what was Buck best? 3. What did Pike do before the end of the first day?
1. How did the dogs run once more? 2. What surprised François? 3. How far had they travelled each day for the last two weeks?
1. What was the heavy load which they were carrying? 2. Of what did Buck make sure? 3. What was the best part of the day?
1. What did Buck love to do best of all? 2. What did he seem to know about? 3. Who seemed to be in front of Buck?
1. In what state were the dogs when they reached Dawson? 2. What did the men do before they went to sleep every night? 3. How far had the dogs travelled since the beginning of winter?
1. Who suffered the most? 2. What did he do when camp was set up? 3. Why was he taken out of the team?—"So that he——."
1. What did Dave do when the sledge started? 2. Where did he refuse to run? 3. Why had the sledge not moved? 4. Where was Dave standing?

1. "A dog can break its heart if——." If what? 2. How was Dare the next morning? 3. How did he move towards the sledge?
5. 1. How much weight had Buck lost? 2. What was the matter with all the dogs? 3. How far had they travelled when they reached Skaguay?
1. What did the drivers expect? 2. Why was there a lot of mail? 3. What did Charles and Hal do?
1. What was the new owners' camp like? 2. Who was Mercedes? 3. Why did the tent appear bigger than it should have been?
1. Who came to watch the three people loading their sledge? 2. Mercedes said that she could not travel without the tent. What did the man say?—"It's——and you——." 3. What did Mercedes do when Hal prepared to whip the dogs?
1. What did one of the men say about the dogs?—"They need——." 2. What did Mercedes do to Buck? 3. How can Hal and Charles help the dogs to move the sledge?
1. What happened when the sledge turned into the main street? 2. Why were the dogs angry?
1. What did Mercedes do when she had finished with her own clothes? 2. How many dogs were added to the team? 3. Why should fourteen dogs not pull one sledge?
1. How many times had Buck travelled between Salt Water and Dawson? 2. What did Buck feel about the three people? 3. Why had they to stop often during the day? 4. They never succeeded in —— . In doing what?
1. What did Hal find after they had travelled a quarter of the distance? 2. What stopped them from travelling longer hours?
1. What were the three people never tired of doing? 2. What did Charles and Hal each believe? 3. What happened while the three people were quarrelling? (Three things)
1. How was Mercedes now treated by Charles and Hal? 2. What did she begin to do? 3. What did the men do to her on one occasion?
1. How did the hair on Buck's body appear? 2. What did the dogs do when they were allowed to stop? 3. How did Hal kill Billee? 4. How many dogs remained?

1. What kind of weather was it? 2. What sound arose from all the land?  
3. What was happening to the ice?
1. Where was John Thornton's camp? 2. What was he doing when they arrived? 3. What did Thornton advise them *not* to do? "I tell you straight:—."
1. What did Buck not do when he was whipped? 2. Buck had a feeling that——. That what? 3. What did John Thornton do?
1. What did Thornton say to Hal? "If you——." 2. What did Thornton do when Hal took out his hunting-knife? 3. What did Thornton do with the knife?
1. Why did Hal not fight back? 2. What did Thornton find after he had examined Buck? 3. What happened to Hal and Charles and Mercedes?
- 6.** 1. Where did John Thornton's friends go? 2. What made his feet completely better?
1. How did the two dogs behave towards Buck? 2. What did Buck feel for the first time? 3. How did John Thornton look after his dogs?
1. How did Buck show his love for John Thornton? 2. In what way did Buck behave differently from Skeet and Nig? 3. Buck was afraid that Thornton might——. Might do what? 4. Why did Buck fear this?—"Because he had had—."
1. What still remained alive in Buck? 2. What was mercy often mistaken for? 3. What was the law of the wild?
1. What spirits were inside Buck? 2. Where did the call command Buck to go? 3. What drew him back to the fire again?
1. Who were Hans and Pete? 2. What kind of men were they? 3. What did Buck try to do when Thornton moved his arm over the cliff edge?  
4. What did Pete say? "I shouldn't like to be——."
1. What was "Black" Burton trying to do? 2. What did he do to Thornton?  
3. How did Burton save his own life?
1. Where were Thornton and his two friends taking the boat? 2. Where was Buck while Thornton was in the boat? 3. What happened when Hans pulled the rope?
1. What did Buck immediately do? 2. What did Thornton catch hold of? 3. What did Thornton shout?

1. What did Pete and Hans do to Buck? 2. What mistake did Buck make? 3. What did the sound of Thornton's voice cause Buck to do?
1. Where did Buck start to swim? 2. What did Thornton hold? 3. How badly hurt was Buck?
1. What did the third man say about his dog? 2. What did John Thornton say about Buck? 3. What did Matthewson say? "I'll give you——."
1. What had Thornton not got? 2. What had Matthewson got outside? 3. What did Jim O'Brien do for John Thornton?
1. How long had Matthewson's sledge been standing outside the Eldorado? 2. What did no one believe? 3. How many dollars did the three men gather?
1. How many dogs did Matthewson use to pull the sledge? 2. What did one man offer John Thornton?
1. Where did Buck first swing to? 2. What happened after Buck's second spring? 3. What did Buck do when Thornton shouted "Mush!"?
1. What marked the end of the hundred yards? 2. What did Thornton do to Buck? 3. What did Buck do to Thornton?
7. 1. How much had Buck won for John Thornton? 2. Why did Thornton want to go to the East? 3. What had there been there from the beginning?
1. When did John Thornton hunt? 2. Why did they burn holes in the ice? 3. What did the men enter after summer?
1. What did they once find? 2. What did they find another time? 3. What did Thornton find among some old clothes?
1. What was there for the dogs to do? 2. What picture came back to Buck? 3. What seemed to be the chief thing of this other world?
1. What moved Buck with strange desires? 2. At what did Buck bark with joy? 3. What did Buck especially love to do?
1. What was the call from the forest? 2. What did he see in the open place among the trees? 3. What did every movement show?
1. What did the wolf do in the end? 2. What did he make clear to Buck?

1. When did Buck suddenly remember John Thornton? 2. What did the wolf do for almost an hour? 3. What did Buck do when he saw John Thornton? 4. When did the call from the forest sound again?
1. What did Buck begin to do? 2. What had happened to the black bear before Buck killed it? 3. What things in Buck made him different from a wolf?
1. How did Buck think? 2. What did the men not see after Buck had left the camp?
1. Where were the moose going? 2. What was the reason for the bull's fierce anger? 3. Why did Buck draw back when the bull charged?
1. Buck knew how to——. To do what? 2. How long did Buck stay at the side of the band of moose?
1. What did the rest of the moose do when night came? 2. What did Buck never let the bull do?
1. When did Buck kill the old bull? 2. Buck had a feeling that —— . That what?
1. What did Buck find in the bush? 2. How was Hans lying? 3. What did Buck allow to happen? Why?
1. What did Buck do to the chief? 2. Why did the Indians shoot one another?
1. What did Thornton's death do to Buck? 2. What gave Buck great pride in himself? 3. Why was Buck now ready to obey the call?
1. What did Buck do to the first wolf which attacked him? 2. How many wolves attacked Buck before the whole pack came forward? 3. Where was Buck forced?—"Past the——to a place which——."
1. What did the wolves do after half an hour? 2. Which wolf first advanced towards Buck?
1. What change did the Indians see in some of the wolves? 2. Of what are the Indians afraid?

## List of extra words

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| bark       | 1 |
| bull-moose | 7 |
| club       | 1 |
| growl      | 1 |
| harness    | 2 |
| moose      | 7 |
| packs      | 2 |
| rapids     | 6 |
| sledge     | 2 |
| throat     | 1 |

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